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ROBESPIERRE

AND

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

ROBESPIERRE

From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.

ROBESPIERRE

AND THE

FRENCH REVOLUTION

BY CHARLES F. WARWICK

AUTHOR OF MIRABEAU AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION
DANTON AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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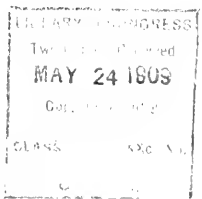

PREFACE

This is the last volume in a series of three books on the three most distinguished and representative men in each of the three distinctive periods of the French Revolution. The first volume is on Mirabeau, who dominated the Revolution from the meeting of the States-General in May, 1789, until his death in April, 1791, and whose purpose was to save the monarchy but to restrict its arbitrary power by constitutional limitations. The second volume is on Danton, who became, after the death of Mirabeau, the representative of the radical republican sentiment and was the controlling figure during the period that witnessed the overthrow of the monarchy, the establishment of the republic and the execution of the king. This, the third volume, is on Robespierre, the ruling spirit during the "Reign of Terror," from the expulsion of the Girondins until his execution in July, 1794.

It is not contended, of course, that the French Revolution can be divided by exact metes and bounds into three separate periods; but Mirabeau, Danton, and Robespierre, more than any other leaders of that era, stood in the periods they dominated as the representatives of the prevailing principles and purposes of the Revolution.

As was originally stated, it has been my intention to trace briefly the causes of the Revolution and to group its principal events around these three men. Although each book is separate and complete in itself, the three volumes form a series covering the entire period of the Revolution.

All of the illustrations are from the very valuable collection of engravings, autograph letters, and documents owned by William J. Latta, Esq., of Philadelphia, and I take this opportunity to thank him for his kindness and courtesy in giving me access to his collection for the purpose of making selections.

I desire further in this connection to acknowledge my obligation to the Provost and the Librarian of the University of Pennsylvania for permitting me to make a translation of the original and very interesting letter of Robespierre to Benjamin Franklin, dated October 1, 1783, which appears in this volume.

CHARLES F. WARWICK.

Philadelphia, February, 1909.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

PAGE

Robespierre 15

CHAPTER II

Diversity of Opinion as to the Character and the Purposes of Robespierre..... 39

CHAPTER III

Birth of Robespierre—Family—Education—Comes to the Bar..... 49

CHAPTER IV

France—Louis XIII—Louis XIV—Versailles—Louis XV—Accession of Louis XVI—The Causes of the French Revolution—Transforming Periods—Results of the French Revolution..... 59

CHAPTER V

The Nobility—Suffering of the People—The Reveillon Incident—Necker Urges Calling of States-General—King Calls States-General—The Notables—Election of Deputies—Robespierre Chosen Deputy From Arras 76

CHAPTER VI

Meeting of the States-General—Robespierre and Mirabeau—Robespierre Replies to the Bishop—Delegates of the Third Estate Declare Themselves the National Assembly—Sieyès—Oath of the Tennis Court—Mounier—Royal Sitting—Mirabeau Defies the Order of the King..... 84

CONTENTS

CHAPTER VII

PAGE

Arrest and Release of the French Guards—Dismissal of Necker—Fall of the Bastile—Murder of De Flesseles, Delaunay, Foulon, Berthier..... 95

CHAPTER VIII

Declaration of the Rights of Man—Abolition of Privileges—Feast of the Guards—March of the Women to Versailles—Return of the King to Paris—The Jacobins—Robespierre Gains Power and Influence Through His Association with the Jacobins..... 109

CHAPTER IX

France Divided Into Departments—Paris—Murder of François—The Theatres—Confiscation of Church Property—Assignats 118

CHAPTER X

The King Visits the Assembly—Marquis de Favres—Count D'Inisdal—Reorganization of the Church—Festival of the Federation—Affair of Nancy..... 127

CHAPTER XI

Resignation of Necker—Necker—The National Guard—The King's Aunts—The Affair of Vincennes—The Day of the Daggers—Théroigne de Mericourt—Mirabeau—Story of the Alleged Conspiracy to Poison Mirabeau..... 138

CHAPTER XII

The King's Flight to Varennes—Danton and Robespierre Attack La Fayette at the Jacobins'—Return of the King—Deposition of King Favored—Duke of Orleans Suggested as Successor to Louis XVI..... 159

CHAPTER XIII

Address Issued by the Republican Society—Thomas Paine—Voltaire—Funeral of Voltaire..... 169

CONTENTS

CHAPTER XIV

PAGE

The Assembly Decrees the Inviolability of the King—Fusillade of the Champ de Mars—Robespierre Finds Refuge in the House of Duplay—Duport—Barnave—Charles Lameth..... 179

CHAPTER XV

Journalism and Journalists—The Cafés—The Guignettes—Ça Ira—Carmagnole..... 190

CHAPTER XVI

Revision of the Constitution—Robespierre Urges the Immediate Adoption of the Constitution—The Constitution Adopted—Robespierre Returns to Arras and is Given an Ovation—The Legislative Assembly Convoked—The Girondins—Brissot—Vergniaud-Gensonné—Guadet—Isnard—Oratory in France..... 208

CHAPTER XVII

The Girondins Favor War—Robespierre Opposes Declaration of War—War Declared—Accusation of the Emigrant Princes—Mirabeau the Younger—The King's Vetoes—Proclamation of the Duke of Brunswick—Danton 222

CHAPTER XVIII

The National Convention Convoked—The Legislative Bodies of the Revolution—The Republic Proclaimed—Jacobins and Girondins—Robespierre Assailed by Louvet—Robespierre Replies to Louvet—Barère.... 233

CHAPTER XIX

Trial of the King—His Execution—Treason of Dumouriez—Lasource Attacks Danton—Dumouriez—Girondins—Marat Accused—Hall of the Convention 247

CHAPTER XX

Robespierre's Reply to Vergniaud—Girondins Expelled From the Convention—Marat's Assassination—Trial

CONTENTS

PAGE

and Execution of Charlotte Corday—Festival of August the Tenth—The Great Committee..... 262

CHAPTER XXI

Execution of Marie Antoinette—Trial and Execution of the Girondins—Execution of Madame Roland... 278

CHAPTER XXII

Danton Grows Weary of Slaughter—Robespierre Rebukes Camille—Robespierre Defends Danton—Couthon—St. Just..... 288

CHAPTER XXIII

An Irreligious Frenzy—Execution of the Hébertists—Robespierre Meets Danton at Dinner—Execution of the Dantonists..... 298

CHAPTER XXIV

Was Robespierre the Scapegoat of the Revolution?—Attempted Assassination of Collot d'Herbois by L'Admiral—Cecile Regnault..... 308

CHAPTER XXV

Irreligious Condition of France—Festival of the Supreme Being..... 316

CHAPTER XXVI

Law of the 22nd Prairial—Robespierre's Friends Urge Him to Seize Dictatorship..... 329

CHAPTER XXVII

Catharine Theot—Madame de Saint-Amaranthe—Her Execution—The Reign of Death..... 336

CHAPTER XXVIII

Robespierre's Enemies Plot His Downfall—Robespierre Grows Supine..... 351

CONTENTS

CHAPTER XXIX

PAGE

Robespierre's Last Speech in the Convention..... 355

CHAPTER XXX

Robespierre Assailed in the Convention—His Accusation and Arrest—Execution of Robespierre and His Friends 362

CHAPTER XXXI

Reaction After the Death of Robespierre—Collot d'Herbois, Billaud-Varennes, Vadier, and Barère Tried and Convicted—Uprising of the 20th of May, 1795—Massacre of Feraud—Trial, Conviction, and Suicide of Romme and His Companions—Constitution of 1795—Robespierre as Compared With His Contemporaries—How the Revolution Affected the Minds of Men—Its Influence and Lessons..... 373

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FACING PAGE

ROBESPIERRE. From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.....*Frontispiece*

VERGNIAUD. From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq., after a painting by Raffet.. 34

MARAT'S CERTIFICATE OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE ENGLISH LODGE OF MASONS. From the original in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq..... 68

THÉROIGNE DE MERICOURT. From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq., after a painting by Raffet..... 148

DROUET. From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq., after a painting by Raffet..... 160

BARNAVE. From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq..... 182

CHARLES DE LAMETH. From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq..... 186

GENSONNÉ. From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq., after a painting by Raffet... 218

BARÈRE. From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq..... 244

VALAZÉ. From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq., after a painting by Raffet..... 280

GEORGES COUTHON. From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq., after a painting by Ducreux 290

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FACING PAGE

ST. JUST. From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq. 296

FOUQUIER TINVILLE. From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq. 346

BILLAUD-VARENNES. From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq., after a painting by Raffet 352

EXTRACT FROM THE REGISTRY OF THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY. From the original in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq. 364

COLLOT D'HERBOIS. From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq., after a painting by Raffet. 384

ROBESPIERRE

AND

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CHAPTER I

ROBESPIERRE

It would be difficult to find in the history of the world, or in the biographies of its distinguished men, anyone with so little genius who reached such an eminence in so violent a period as did Robespierre. His natural talents were mediocre, and among the leading men in the early days of the Revolution he held an inferior place; but in spite of many personal and mental disadvantages, which would have ruinously handicapped any man with a spirit less indomitable, he at last reached a position of commanding influence and power.

He was possessed of a single ruling idea, and had a fixedness of purpose, an indefatigable perseverance, that neither fate nor defeat could weaken or destroy.

His reserve was impenetrable, and this made it interesting as well as difficult to fathom his pur-

pose. By his earnestness, he impressed men with his sincerity, and he was so far removed from every form and feature of venality that he was in time designated "The Incorruptible," this term being applied neither in irony nor in contempt. Desmoulins, who had been his schoolfellow and who formed an alliance with him in the beginning of the Revolution, called him his Aristides and did this with every mark of respect, and this reputation for integrity did not abate as time ran on.

When he entered a meeting of the Jacobins in November, 1791, after his return to Paris from Arras, Collot d' Herbois at once arose and said: "I move that this distinguished member of the Constituent Assembly, justly surnamed 'The Incorruptible,' be called to preside over this society." The motion was carried by acclamation.

In temperament Robespierre was cold and proof against the allurements that seduce men. Women and the pleasures of the table were to him no temptation. Money could not bribe nor persuade him. He had neither lust nor avarice. Although without vices and passions, he was also without the courage, the greatness, and the impulsive generosity that so often accompany them.

He was dogmatic in opinion; "his conviction was to him always a sufficing reason."

His vanity and conceit were monumental and like all men of affectation he appeared at times

to be overcome with *ennui*, acting as if his burdens were too heavy to be borne.

In health he was not robust, being troubled with some form of indigestion which gave his face a bilious hue. "I once conversed with Robespierre," said Madame de Staël, "at my father's house in 1789. His features were mean, his complexion was pale, his veins were of a greenish hue."

He had a nervous twitching of the eyes, to conceal which he wore green glasses. Dumont states that "he had a sinister expression of countenance, never looked you in the face, and had a continual and an unpleasant winking."

Lamartine, who was close enough to the Revolution to meet many persons who had seen and known Robespierre, describes his appearance as follows: "His figure was small; his limbs were feeble and angular; his step was irresolute; his attitudes were affected; his gestures destitute of harmony and grace; his voice was rather shrill; his forehead was good but small and extremely projecting above the temples; his eyes were much covered by their lids, were very sharp at the extremities, and were deeply buried in the cavities of their orbits; they gave out a soft blue hue, but it was vague and unfixed; his nose was straight and small, but very wide at the nostrils, which were high and too much expanded; his mouth was large; his lips were thin and disagreeably contracted at each corner; his chin was small and pointed; his complexion was yellow and livid.

The habitual expression of this visage was that of superficial serenity on a serious mind and a smile wavering betwixt sarcasm and condescension."

Like a number of other distinguished men of that period, among whom can be named Mirabeau, Danton, and Vergniaud, he was marked with the smallpox. In stature he was short, being but 5 feet 2 inches in height.

When he came to Paris as a deputy he lived frugally in a retired quarter of the city. His lodgings were in the district known as the Marais, "in the dismal Rue de Saintonge." "He spends little," said Condorcet, "and has but few physical wants." Lamartine states that his dinners cost him thirty sous. His only extravagance was his love of oranges, which he ate by the dozen.

In the summer of 1791 he took up his abode in the house of Maurice Duplay, a carpenter or cabinet-maker residing on the Rue St. Honoré opposite the Church of the Assumption. The house was low, two stories and an attic, and surrounded by a court which was filled with lumber, over which were constructed weather sheds; here was also the shop of the landlord. Robespierre's room was on the second floor, the windows of it looking out on the yard. It contained a wooden bedstead, a table, and four stout straw-bottomed chairs, being comfortably but not luxuriously furnished. It served for his study as well as dormitory. Shelves against the walls held his library,

his manuscripts, and copies of his carefully prepared speeches.

"His apartments, though small," writes Scott, "were elegant, and vanity had filled them with representations of the occupant; his picture, at length, hung in one place, his miniature in another, his bust occupied a niche, and on the table were disposed a few medallions exhibiting his head in profile." Barbaroux, in his Memoirs, says that his *boudoir* was handsomely furnished and filled with pictures, prints, and busts of himself. This must have been at a period other than when he was living at Duplay's house, for there is no proof that while he resided there he had a dressing-room such as Scott and Barbaroux describe.

He had no means while in Paris other than his pay as a deputy, with the exception of rent from two or three small farms in the neighborhood of Arras; and this rent was meagre in amount and irregularly paid.

The revenues from these two sources constituted his sole income, for he did not practice his profession while in attendance upon the sessions of the Assembly. One-fourth of all he received he sent to his sister Charlotte and, according to Michelet, one-fourth to a mistress who devotedly loved him but whom he seldom saw. There is a story extant that at one time he actually closed the door in her face.

The family with whom he resided consisted of M. Duplay, his wife, his son, and four daugh-

ters; the eldest of the children, named Eléonoré, was twenty-five years of age. The household was orderly, respectable, and affectionate, and Robespierre partook of those delights of domesticity which up to this point in his life he had never enjoyed. In this quiet circle he was not the frigid, austere man that he was in the outer world; here he was seen at his best. Agreeable, considerate, gentle, and kindly, he won not only the admiration, but the affection of every member of the family. Duplay belonged to the Society of the Jacobins, and had met Robespierre at its meetings; he had for him the highest regard and felt much honored in having so distinguished a man as a lodger under his humble roof.

For recreation Robespierre was in the habit of indulging in long walks and on these occasions he was usually accompanied by a big Danish dog named Bruant. Occasionally he would take Madame Duplay and her daughters to the theatre, and this seems to have been his only amusement.

In attire he was very neat, his clothes were well brushed, but sometimes, during the early period of his sojourn in Paris, showed wear. His hair was powdered, he wore short or knee breeches, shirt frills, and shoes with silver buckles, in defiance of *sans-culottism,* until the day of his death. He believed with Madame Roland that patriotism did not consist in " swearing, drinking, and dressing like porters."

The author of " Memoirs of a Peer of France " says: " He was particular about having his linen

very fine and very white. He would have his frills plaited with extreme neatness; he wore waistcoats of delicate colors — pink, light blue, and chamois elegantly embroidered. The dressing of his hair took him considerable time and he was difficult to please about the cut and color of his coats. He had two watches, wore several costly rings on his fingers, and had a valuable collection of snuff boxes."

The story that his wardrobe was so scanty that he was compelled to borrow a black coat from a man much larger than himself, at the time the Assembly went into mourning for Franklin, may be pronounced a mere fabrication. He was too particular in the matter of dress and too proud in spirit to go around smothered in a coat of which the tails, according to Michelet, trailed four inches on the ground.

Although not given to fawning, it is related that during the early sessions of the States-General he was all but obsequious in his attentions to Mirabeau, and persisted in walking with him in the streets and in the public promenades and gardens till he was nicknamed Mirabeau's ape.

Robespierre was, unquestionably, of a highly nervous temperament, but in the "Memoirs of a Peer of France" he is charged with absolute childish timidity. "I had in my room," says the writer, "a skull which I made use of to study anatomy. The sight of it was so disagreeable to him that he at last begged me to put it away and not let him see it any more." The same author further adds that Robespierre "did not like

to be left alone in the dark. The slightest noise made him shudder, and terror was expressed in his eyes." There must be a shade of exaggeration in these statements, for if Robespierre shuddered when alone in the dark he could not have been so self-reliant when out in the world; he evinced no signs of timidity in his daily intercourse with men, and was of a most independent spirit. He repelled all familiarity, and unless he removed the barriers men kept at a distance. Dumouriez, upon the occasion of a visit to a certain club, consented to wear the red cap, and Louis XVI wore it for two hours on the memorable "Day of the Black Breeches," [1] but when some one placed it on the powdered locks of Robespierre at the Jacobins', he indignantly tore it from his head, threw it to the floor, and trampled it under foot.

It was hard to reach his heart or to move his compassion. The Duchess d' Abrantes relates that a young and fascinating woman, Madame Lamarliere, appealed to him for the release of her husband from prison. "She had the courage to implore the mercy of one who never knew mercy." She called upon him at his lodgings in the Rue St. Honoré on the day he gave away in marriage the daughter of Duplay the carpenter. He left the nuptial feast to meet the visitor, and it was such an occasion, one would think, as he would have found pleasure in memorializing by an act of clemency. Madame Lamarliere was of dazzling beauty, and her despair tended greatly to

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 200.

heighten it. She threw herself at his feet and begged for mercy, but her tears, her intercession, and her anguish failed to move the pity of his heart. When she withdrew, he simply remarked: "She is a very pretty woman — very pretty indeed," and then, the Duchess adds, he made a suggestive and an indecent comment. If this last statement be true, it was exceptional conduct upon his part, for he was not given to the use of lewd or vulgar language.

With none of those qualities of heart that induce popular affection, he had only a few personal friends, but those few seemed to possess his entire confidence; with them he was on the most familiar terms, but when out among strangers, he was distant, unsociable, and at times even brusque. Barère relates in his Memoirs the following incident which, if true, reveals Robespierre in anything but an agreeable light. It appears that M. Lomenie was anxious to meet him and requested Barère to invite him to dinner. Barère at first refused on the ground that Robespierre was very uncompanionable, suspicious, and distrustful; but, at last consenting, an invitation was extended and much to the surprise of Barère was accepted. The dinner was spread for six at a restaurant kept by a man named Meot. The company was gay enough, but Robespierre was quiet and morose and did not enter into conversation until after the coffee was served. He then asked Barère the name of the gentleman who sat next to him. Upon being informed that it was M. Lomenie, a nephew

of the cardinal who had convoked the States-General, he replied: "He is a Brienne, and a noble," and a few seconds after this he took his hat, and retired without a word more.

Cold, repellant, without generous emotions, he yet had qualities that enabled him to force his way to the front, and by a relentless policy to overthrow his adversaries, attain an eminence, and in one of the stormiest periods in the world's history exercise a power that was almost imperial.

"It is owing to his inferior abilities," says Mignet, "that he appeared among the last of the revolutionary leaders — a great advantage in a revolution, for the earlier leaders are certain to be swept away." This sounds very plausible as a general proposition, but the truth is that Robespierre became a leader in a comparatively early stage of the Revolution — long before the chiefs and the factions began to destroy each other.

It is true that, at first, he made but a slight impression upon his colleagues and exerted no power in the Assembly; in fact, so little known was he among the delegates, that his name was frequently misspelt in the journal, but after he attained his influence with the Jacobins he was a factor to be reckoned with, and that made a great difference in the treatment he received and in the opinion that was held concerning him. A man's importance in politics is measured by the influence he wields. A distinguished Englishman, in a letter written to a friend in the latter

part of 1790, commenting upon the purchase of Mirabeau by the court, said he would rather buy Robespierre.

He was, at the date of Mirabeau's death in the spring of 1791, a representative of the advanced revolutionists, and even more prominent than Danton, whose reputation at this period was confined within his own section. He did not lose his prominence and popularity as time progressed, for upon the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly he, with Pétion, was crowned by the people of Paris. At this point he represented not only the most radical club in France but also the populace, and exerted an influence second to no man in the nation. He was never an idol of the mob in the sense that Marat was, but he unquestionably had their respect and confidence, and they "supported him as the best representative of their doctrines and interests."

There was a reason for his elevation. It was not, by any means, the result of mere chance; it was gained by energy, application, hard work. Although wanting in what is called physical courage, he had great determination and pursued indefatigably the object he had in view. He was consistent in his political conduct and that is always a claim to public favor.

In his devotion to the Revolution he was almost fanatical and would remorselessly have destroyed anything that stood in the way of its success, but he was not alone among the revolutionists in this respect. He was a zealot, a bigot, with the spirit of a Calvin and the intolerance

of a Torquemada, looking upon the enemies of the Revolution as those pious and devout men did upon heretics. He sometimes countenanced evil that good might come, or in other words, advocated the dangerous doctrine that the end justifies the means. The same spirit of intolerance that characterizes a religious persecution dominated the French Revolution, and when religion sends a heretic to the stake it is not called murder.

At a time when, religious restraint having been removed, men gave way to vicious indulgences, he was severely virtuous and honest. It was never even intimated that he was in negotiation with the court. When their emissaries were abroad in every direction corrupting and bribing men, even some of the most distinguished in the ranks of the revolutionists, he was not for a moment suspected. A fortune was within his reach, but not a sou of dishonest money soiled his fingers. Napoleon declared that if Pitt had offered Robespierre two million pounds his offer would have been spurned with indignation. No one ever questioned his personal integrity. His debts at the time of his death, after a five years' residence in Paris, amounted to only 4,000 francs.

Living frugally and decently in the sight of the community, his Spartan virtue and democratic simplicity won for him the regard and admiration of the multitude.

Because of his known integrity Robespierre was a terror to evil doers, and he despised those scoundrels who, while professing loyalty to the

republic, were making money out of their positions and thus "dishonoring the Revolution." In this connection Barras, in his Memoirs, gives a very interesting account of a visit he and Fréron paid to Robespierre at his lodgings in the house of Duplay. They were a pair of scamps and had but recently returned from the South, where they had been sent as commissioners to represent the republic. Their administration had been vile, not only corrupt, but cruel. At Toulon blood had flowed in streams, the rich had been forced to give tribute, and the suspected in many instances saved their heads only by the payment of good round sums in gold. Reports of their villainous practices had reached the capital, and Barras and Fréron upon their return to Paris were kept busy in calling upon the members of the Great Committee, making a denial of the charges, and explaining and defending their conduct. Of course Robespierre had to be interviewed and, if possible, calmed, for he was specially bitter in his denunciation of the rogues and their accomplices. In order to visit "the eminent man who deigned to inhabit a humble little hole of a place," it was necessary to pass through an alley-way on both sides of which were piles of lumber, "the owner's stock in trade." This passage brought them into the yard of Duplay's dwelling.

Fréron, who had called at the house before, knew the way to Robespierre's room, and was about ascending the staircase when he was intercepted by Duplay's daughter, who said that

the deputy was not in. A quizzical look on Fréron's face induced her to admit the truth and she called up the stairs, announcing that Fréron and another man whom she did not know were below. The two visitors were then permitted to go to the room above, where they met the little deputy. They saluted him cordially, but he said not a word, and gave them no sign of recognition. He was without his spectacles, and his half-closed, squinting eyes turned on them in a cold stare. He wore a dressing gown, and his face was covered with powder, for he had just finished shaving. In one hand he held a wash basin, and in the other a toilet knife, with which he scraped the powder off his face, all the while standing in front of a mirror or else turning to "a toilet glass hanging to a window, looking out over the courtyard." The visitors kept on talking, but he paid little if any attention to what they were saying; in fact, he acted as if he were totally unmindful of their presence. He doffed his *peignoir* and flung it on a chair so close to his unwelcome callers that he covered their clothes with powder; he brushed his teeth and spat in their direction, treating them with the utmost disdain and contempt. If they had been honest men they would have strangled him, but paltroons who are in danger of losing their heads are not apt to resent the insults of a man who holds their lives in his hands. After the one-sided interview Barras and Fréron bowed themselves out, but one can easily imagine what

they said when they were alone and beyond the hearing of their enemy.

Unlike Mirabeau and Danton, who themselves created power, Robespierre, as a wise politician, sought it among the people, where it resides. He was not a leader in the sense that this word may be applied to the two great men just mentioned, but he was a popular representative in a wider sense than either of them.

As an example of what mediocrity can accomplish by persistent effort Robespierre stands out boldly. Genius may waver or may shift from one thing to another, but perseverance and industry, backed by an indomitable will, may overcome almost insurmountable obstacles and reach results that a halting genius could never attain.

Nature did not bestow upon Robespierre a single attribute of the orator. He was insignificant in appearance; his voice was thin and without a strain of pathos in its entire compass; its high notes, when he was emphatic, angry or impassioned, were a succession of shrill squeaks.

When he first came to Paris, "he spoke with the vulgar accent of his province." By constant practice and close observation, however, he did improve his pronunciation and acquired, notwithstanding his natural defects, a certain facility in off-hand speaking; but he cannot really be classed with the great orators of the Convention.

He was lacking in imagery and emotion and "that gift of extemporaneous speaking which

pours forth the unpremeditated inspirations of natural eloquence." As a rule he was cold, self-centred, disputatious. He was not a good debater; he had not the wit, the ready repartee, the quickness of apprehension, the faculty of seeing and seizing at the moment the weak points in an adversary's argument, qualities that are so necessary to success in parliamentary debates or discussions.

His studied speeches were clear enough in argument but often verbose and platitudinous; they were frequently interlarded with classical quotations and allusions, and they always revealed the great care taken in their preparation; in fact, he was as careful in their preparation as he was in the making of his toilet. At times his speeches were so finely polished that the eloquence they did contain lost much of its natural ring. There is often apparent the effort made to put his thoughts into an epigrammatic form, a faculty that Danton possessed to a pre-eminent degree.

Yet Robespierre was, in a great measure, one of the most distinguished speakers of the Revolution, and it was through his speeches that he gained his importance and elevation. Desmoulins declared that he was, at times, really eloquent. Carnot was of opinion that it was his facility in speech that aided materially his elevation. *"D'Abord il avoit les paroles à la main."* Cambacères told Napoleon that the final oration delivered by Robespierre in the Convention

abounded in beauties, and Charles Nodier pronounced it, "*une œuvre monumentale.*"

Lamartine says that although Robespierre was "destitute of exterior graces, he had taken so much pains with himself — he had meditated so much, written and erased so much; he had besides so often braved the inattention and sarcasm of his audiences — that in the end he succeeded in giving warmth and suppleness to his style and in transforming his whole person, despite his stiff and meagre figure, his shrill voice and abrupt gesticulation, into an engine of eloquence, of conviction, and of passion."

Garat, who at one time was minister of Justice and the Interior, and also a member of the Constituent Assembly, in speaking of Robespierre as an orator said: "Through the insignificant prattle of his daily improvisations, through his eternal repetitions on the rights of man, on the sovereignty of the people, on those principles of which he spoke without ceasing and upon which he never shed a new light, there could be discovered, especially when Robespierre became impressive, the germ of a talent which was likely to grow, and which in its full development would in time become an instrument for much good or much evil. In his style there was an attempt to imitate those forms of the language which have elegance, nobility, and éclat. It was easy to divine that it was almost alone from Rousseau that he drew his inspiration."

A very interesting description of the appear-

ance and manner of Robespierre while addressing a meeting of the Jacobins in 1793, is given by Fiévér. This was at a period in his life when he had had much experience in public speaking and when he had acquired that ease and composure which come only from long and constant practice. The picture, perhaps, is somewhat overdrawn, but it is so graphic that we can almost see and hear the orator and observe his mannerisms.

"Robespierre," says the writer, "came forward slowly. He was about the only one at this epoch who wore the costume in vogue before the Revolution. Even his hair was dressed and powdered in the old style. Small, spare in figure, he resembled more than anything else a tailor of the ancient *régime*. He wore spectacles, which he either actually needed or which served to conceal the twitchings of his austere and common physiognomy. His delivery was slow and measured, his phrases were so long that, every time he stopped to raise his spectacles, one would believe that he had nothing more to say, but after looking slowly and searchingly over the audience in every quarter of the room, he would readjust his glasses and then add some phrases to the sentences, which were already of an unusual length before he had suspended speaking." Robespierre did not command the attention of the Chamber in the early sessions of the States-General and the National Assembly. Every time he rose to speak, and he was continually rising, the delegates would scoff and sneer at his efforts,

smile and at times even laugh aloud; but, nothing daunted, he persisted in his purpose. "He preaches, he moralizes, he is grave, melancholic, severe in his speech," said Condorcet. "His whole mission consists of talking and he is almost always talking."

When the great American Naval Commander, John Paul Jones, appeared before the Assembly, the President extended to him, in a few graceful, well-chosen words, a most generous welcome, which, under all the circumstances, was sufficient. Robespierre, however, resolved to add a few compliments of his own and, although interrupted by murmurs and signs of disapprobation, he insisted upon being heard and even appealed to the gallery to aid him in the exercise of his right of free speech, desisting only when the caustic and sarcastic Maury caused a general guffaw by moving that the remarks of the learned member be printed.

There is nothing that so galls or chafes the spirit of a vain man as to make him appear ridiculous, and Robespierre often carried his mortification home to his humble lodgings, brooded over it, and then at last soothed his wounded feelings by carefully writing another speech.

Mirabeau never joined in these insults, and seemed to be the only man among the deputies who read a sign of future greatness in his character. The mighty, far-seeing tribune was one who seldom made a mistake in his judgment of men. He appreciated the force of that inflexible will, that earnestness of purpose, and remarked:

"That man will go far, for he believes every word he says."

In the early years of his career when he attempted to speak in public, Robespierre was troubled with what is termed stage-fright. He told Dumont that his timidity at times was so great that he never stood in the tribune without trembling, and that his faculties often were so absorbed by fear that he could hardly find strength enough to express himself. Yet this timid, hesitating, insignificant-looking creature, wanting in every essential quality of the natural orator, at times when wrought up by the excitement of the occasion became impressive and even eloquent, notably in his attack upon Duport and the Lameths and in his famous reply to Vergniaud.

Duport, the leader of the faction known as the Feuillants, had insulted Robespierre by gestures and remarks made in an undertone. The latter, rising in his place and calmly looking at his tormenter said, addressing the chair: "*Monsieur le President, je vous prie de dire à Monsieur Duport de ne pas m'insulter s'il vent rester auprès de moi.*" Then launching forth with sarcasm in every word he said: "I do not believe that there exists in this Assembly men base enough to bargain with the court upon an article of our constitutional code — perfidious enough to propose making through the court new changes, which shame will not suffer them to propound — enemy enough to the country to attempt discrediting the Constitution because it restrains their ambition or their avarice — impudent enough to

VERGNIAUD

From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.
After a painting by Raffet

avow in the nation's eyes that they have sought in the Revolution the means of their own elevation and aggrandizement; for I will not regard certain writings and certain speeches, that might bear this construction, as anything but the passing explosion of spite, already expiated by repentence. No! at least we shall not be so stupid nor so indifferent as to let ourselves be made the eternal sport of intrigue in order to overthrow one after another all the parts of our work at the pleasure of a few ambitious men.

"I demand that every one of you swear that he never will consent to make a compromise with the executive power upon any article of the Constitution on pain of being declared a traitor to the nation."

In view of the fact that the Feuillants were endeavoring to counteract the Revolution by the establishment of a constitutional monarchy, and were suspected of negotiating with the court, the effect of the speech may well be imagined. The party of Duport and the Lameths had been losing ground, but this arraignment was their political death-knell.

The reply to Vergniaud we shall have occasion to refer to hereafter, and it will be found, in many respects, to be stronger even than the speech just quoted.

One of the most interesting and dramatic speeches that Robespierre ever made was towards the end of his career, when he described the incident of Barra, the boy drummer.

Barra was thirteen years of age and had en-

listed in the army sent to suppress an insurrection of the "Whites" in La Vendée. While beating the charge he unfortunately approached too near the lines of the enemy. Surrounded by the rebels, who hesitated to shoot a child, he was ordered to shout: "Long live the king." The little fellow's defiant answer to the challenge was: "Long live the republic!" Immediately a bullet pierced his heart and he fell dead. The mere telling of such a story would arouse unbounded enthusiasm and sympathy, but Robespierre produced so great an effect in relating it that the Convention voted to transport the remains of the little hero to the Pantheon.

Among the prepared speeches of Robespierre that one on the abolition of the punishment of death, delivered May 30, 1791, is a good example of his pedantic and ornamented style. It seems almost impossible to believe that the opening lines could have fallen from the lips of a man who, not long afterwards, argued so strenuously for the death of the king, urged the condemnation and execution of the Girondins, and secured the passage of the law of the 22nd Prairial.

"The news having been carried to Athens that some citizens had been sentenced to death in the town of Argos, the people ran into the temples and conjured the gods to turn the Athenians away from purposes so cruel and wicked. I am going to implore, not the gods, but the legislators, who ought to be the organs and the interpreters of the eternal laws which the Divinity has prescribed for men, to efface from the code of the

French people the laws of blood which sanction judicial murders and which reflect upon the manners and the new Constitution of France. I wish to prove in the first place that the punishment of death is essentially unjust, and in the second place that it is not the most repressive of punishments; it multiplies crimes much more than it prevents them."

As a statesman it is difficult to classify Robespierre.

Of course it must be admitted that he did not have the constructive intellect and ability, the broad and liberal views, or the practical instincts of Mirabeau and Danton — qualities that made these men pre-eminently great.

"I have always believed," said Marat, "that Robespierre unites the integrity of a thoroughly honest man and the zeal of a good patriot with the enlightenment of a wise senator, but that he is without either the views or the audacity of a real statesman."

He was a man of abstract ideas, not of great practical conceptions, and vast projects; he had no originality, possessed no qualities of invention; he was a man of words, not of deeds; he had talent but was without genius.

Like many of his colleagues of that period, Robespierre was too visionary and spent much of his time in elaborating theories. He never had an opportunity to do more during the stormy years of the Revolution than to tear down; when his chance came to build up he was overthrown and sent to the scaffold. It is a grave question,

however, whether he could have succeeded in establishing a firm government, for he was greatly wanting in organizing ability. He was not a man of action like St. Just; a worker like Billaud-Varennes, or a master of detail like Carnot. He saw the weakness and the dangers incident to a government by committee, and announced himself in favor of a strong and an individual executive, advocating the centralization of power; but it is doubtful whether he could have planned such a form of government successfully.

He favored equality before the law, compulsory education, and religious toleration to the fullest degree, and maintained that "civil society has no other foundation than morals." If he believed in a Reign of Terror, it was as a means to secure a Reign of Virtue.

Bitterly opposing all class distinctions, he was an advocate of the purest democracy. His views on property are fully set forth in his remarkable speech of April 24, 1793, but they are in the main simply a reflection of the ideas of Rousseau. In the beginning of his argument, in referring to an agrarian law, he declared that it was only a phantom created by knaves to frighten fools, and that the idea of a community of goods was a mere chimera. Like St. Just, however, he believed opulence was a crime, and it was upon his motion that the Jacobin Club passed the resolutions favoring the limiting by law of the amount of individual possessions.

CHAPTER II

DIVERSITY OF OPINION AS TO THE CHARACTER AND THE PURPOSES OF ROBESPIERRE

Few men in all history have been so vilified, execrated, and held up to public scorn and condemnation as Robespierre. His name is still, in some quarters, the synonym for cruelty and for selfish ambition. All the vices and excesses of the Revolution are laid at his door. His detractors cannot find language severe enough to express their detestation; while on the other hand his admirers go too far in the opposite direction and laud him in the most extravagant terms. Between these two extremes is to be found his real character.

"Of all men of the Revolution," says Morley, "he has suffered most from the audacious idolatry of some writers and the splenetic impatience of others." "His memory," says a distinguished author, "is an enigma of which history trembles to pronounce the solution, fearing to do him injustice if she brand it as crime, or to create horror if she should term it virtue."

While in many ways he was detestible, it must in all candor be admitted that he had some qualities that command respect if not admiration.

Mirabeau was impressed with his strength and

decision of character and showed him marked respect.

Couthon, a man of great ability, and St. Just, were devoted friends and loyal to the last. His brother, who was fondly attached to him, went willingly with him to the scaffold, and his sister Charlotte, a woman of lovely character, believed absolutely in his sincerity and integrity of purpose and risked her life at the time of his arrest by attempting to minister to his wants.

David, the painter, had a high regard for him, and in addressing his sons said: "You will be told that Robespierre was a villain; he will be painted to you in the most hideous colors; do not believe a word of it. The day will come when history will render him the fullest justice."

Napoleon believed that his intentions were honorable and patriotic. "His plan," declared Cambacères, "after having overturned the furious factions, was to return to a system of order and moderation."

"It is possible," says Belloc, "that he may take, centuries hence, the appearance of majesty. . . . We are accustomed to clothe such figures with a solemn drapery and to lend them at great distances of time a certain terrible grandeur."

Already he is beginning to be better understood; distance is giving the necessary perspective; time is removing the intolerance and prejudice of the past; and he is at least receiving credit for the virtues he did possess. However, as La-

martine says, "This man was and must ever remain shadowy and undefined."

There is no question but that, at the time of his death, he was looked upon as a sanguinary monster, bent on extermination and almost wholly to blame for the then recent terrible carnage. The reports, studiously put into circulation by his enemies to cover up their own crimes, gave him this reputation. "Passenger! lament not his fate; for if he were living, thou wouldst be dead," was suggested as an appropriate epitaph.

Josephine Beauharnais, in her Memoirs, relates the following interesting incident, which shows with what delight, in some quarters, his death was hailed.

One day while standing at the window of the prison, with Madame d' Aiguillon, and looking out into the yard below, Josephine saw a woman endeavoring to attract her attention by making signs. The woman constantly held up her gown (robe) and Josephine made a motion with her lips as if pronouncing the word "Robe." A nodding of the head made answer that this was right, and then the woman lifted up a stone and put it in her apron. Josephine said "pierre," and the woman fairly danced for joy when she saw that her signs were understood, and at once imitated the motion of cutting off the head. This singular pantomime was interpreted by the ladies to mean that Robespierre was no more. Just at that moment there was a noise in the corridor, and the hoarse voice of the gaoler was heard scolding his dog and cursing him for a brute of

a Robespierre, and from this the ladies took fresh hope and courage, and felt that they "had nothing to fear and that France was saved."

Of course, wherever the emigrants were assembled, their demonstrations of joy were beyond all bounds. Madame de Genlis, at one time a mistress of the Duke of Orleans, gives an amusing account of how the news was brought to her. She was living in a boarding-house, filled with emigrants, in Dresden. At midnight, just as the clock was striking the hour, a knock at the door aroused her from her revery. Calling out to the unexpected visitor to come in, she was the next moment struggling in the arms of a bald-headed old gentleman, a fellow lodger, who insisted upon kissing her because the news had reached town that Robespierre was dead. When satisfied of the truth of the report, she "conscientiously returned his embrace."

Barère who, it must not be forgotten, was a member of the Great Committee in the height of its power and during the period of carnage after the death of Danton, wrote in his Memoirs: "One must speak of Robespierre when one wishes to represent France devoured by the most sanguinary and disgusting despotism; one must condescend to pronounce that execrable name, when one wishes to paint the genius of crime and calumny, demoralizing the souls, digging tombs at the side of the prepared scaffolds, destroying all social ideas, overthrowing property, oppressing the representation of the people, and making war on talent and genius like the Visigoths." Barère

was one of the men who, while filling the death carts with innocent victims during the "Reign of Terror," circulated the reports that threw the blame upon Robespierre at a time when the latter, although a member of the Committee, was purposely absenting himself from its sessions. It was this same Barère whose ingenuity invented the story that Robespierre intended to marry the captive daughter of Louis XVI and then proclaim himself king.

Mignet, in his history of the French Revolution, declares that Robespierre "had the qualifications for tyranny; a soul not great, it is true, but not common; the advantage of one sole passion; the appearance of patriotism; a deserved reputation for incorruptibility; an austere life; and no aversion to the effusion of blood."

Michelet speaks conservatively but cannot altogether make up his mind as to the real character of this "honest man who adheres to principles; a man of talent and austere morality."

Lamartine asserts that "his death was the date and not the cause of the cessation of terror. Deaths would have ceased by his triumph as they did by his death."

"He opened the veins of the social body to cure the disease; but he allowed life to flow out, pure or impure, with indifference, without casting himself between the victims and the executioners."

"He did not desire evil and yet accepted it."

For eighteen months, he allowed his name to serve as the standard of the scaffold, and the

justification of death. He hoped subsequently to redeem that which is never redeemed — present crime — through the purity, the holiness of future institutions.

"He was intoxicated with the perspective of public felicity, while France was palpitating on the block."

"He besmeared with blood the purest doctrines of democracy. . . . His principles were sterile and fatal like his proscriptions, and he died exclaiming with the despondency of Brutus 'the Republic perishes with me.' He was in effect, at that moment, the soul of the Republic and it vanished with his last sigh."

"He was," says Thiers, "of the worst species of men, one of the most odious beings that ever ruled over men, and the very vilest, if he had not possessed a strong conviction and an acknowledged integrity."

M. d'Hericault describes him as a fiend in human form, while Louis Blanc holds him in high esteem, and M. Hamel, his most enthusiastic biographer, becomes really fulsome in his laudation.

Lord Brougham, in his interesting sketch of Robespierre, describing him from the English point of view, says: "In fine, that he was beyond most men that ever lived, hateful, selfish, unprincipled, cruel, unscrupulous is undeniable. . . . All the revolutionary chiefs were his superiors in the one great quality of courage. . . . his want of boldness, his abject poverty of spirit made him as despicable as he was

odious. Such was Robespierre — a name at which all men still shudder."

The same writer on another page describes him as "one of the most execrable and most despicable characters recorded in the annals of our race."

Sir Walter Scott says: "He appears to have possessed little talent, saving a deep fund of hypocrisy and considerable powers of sophistry. It seemed wonderful that even the seething and boiling of the revolutionary cauldron should have sent up from the bottom and long supported on the surface a thing so miserably void of claims to public distinction." Scott further calls him "a vain, cowardly calculating miscreant" and declares that his crimes were perpetrated in cold blood and upon mature deliberation.

At times Carlyle cannot find words strong enough to denounce this "creature" whom he repeatedly, monotonously, refers to as "Sea-green Incorruptible." "Consider," he says, "Maximilien Robespierre; for the greater part of two years what one may call Autocrat of France. A poor sea-green *(verdâtre)*, atrabiliar formula of a man; without head, without heart, or any grace, gift or even vice beyond common, if it were not vanity, astucity, diseased rigor (which some count strength) as of a cramp; really a most poor sea-green individual in spectacles; meant by nature for a Methodist parson of the stricter sort, to doom men who departed from the written confession; to chop fruitless shrill

logic; to contend and suspect and ineffectually wrestle and wriggle, and on the whole to love or to know, or to be (properly speaking) Nothing: — this was he who, the sport of wracking winds, saw himself whirled aloft to command *la premiere nation de l'univers,* and all men shouting long life to him; one of the most lamentable, tragic sea-green objects ever whirled aloft in that manner, in any country, to his own swift destruction and the world's long wonder."

Lord Macaulay describes him as "a vain, envious, and suspicious man with a hard heart, weak nerves, and a gloomy temper," and then adds: "But we cannot with truth deny that he was, in a vulgar sense of the word, disinterested, that his private life was correct, or that he was sincerely zealous for his own system of politics and morals."

In opposition to these views, Bronterre O'Brien, an English author, looks upon Robespierre as "little less than divinity"— he intimates, at times, that he is almost "godlike." George Henry Lewes is a warm eulogist, and sees in Robespierre a man "who in his heart believed the gospel proclaimed by the Revolution to be the real gospel of Christianity, and who vainly endeavored to arrest anarchy and to shape society into order by means of his convictions."

Sir Thomas Erskine May, in his "Democracy in Europe," calls him the "terrible" Robespierre and refers to his career as "blood-stained," but adds "he was a fanatic who believed in terror as a sacred duty and, although blind to justice

and insensible to the common principles of humanity, although his cold and calculated cruelties are without a parallel in the history of nations, was planning a model republic representing all the virtues."

H. Morse Stephens has not much respect for his capacity, but believes he was sincere in his purposes.

John Morley can see nothing to admire in a man who was a pedant, a spinster in politics, of profound and pitiable incompetence, cursed with an ambition to be a ruler.

Hilaire Belloc declares that he had "the reserve, the dignity, the intense idealism, the perfect belief in himself, the certitude that others were in sympathy — all the characteristics, in fine, which distinguish the Absolutists and the great Reformers. In his iron code of theory we seem to hear the ghost of a Calvin; in his reiterated morals and his perpetual application of them, there is the occasional sharp reminiscence of a Hildebrand. The famous death cry: "I have loved justice and hated iniquity, therefore I die in exile," is not so far distant from "*de mourir pour le peuple et d'en être abhorré*"— "to die for the people and to be abhorred by them."

Watson, in his "Story of France," describes him as a "Puritan fanatic wedded to politics." "In all the Assembly," he says, "there was not a member more conscientious, more intense, more inflexible, more determined to do thoroughly the work in hand. . . . However chimerical,

Robespierre's ideals were lofty and he lived by them and died for them."

Dr. Jan Ten Brink, the Dutch historian, in his "Robespierre and the Red Terror," says: "He was the advocate of the purest Jacobinism proceeding from the philosophical fancies on political law of a dilettante like Rousseau." After commenting upon the injustice of the Law of the 22nd Prairial, the writer adds: "Still, in spite of all, he was an honorable character, a spirit fired with the noblest ideals — but a statesman without practical ability, an obstinate fanatic, destitute of genius."

Where there is such a diversity of opinion about the character of a man it simply proves that he must have possessed good as well as bad qualities, and, when the mist disappears and he comes out of the shadows of the past, his figure will be more distinctly seen and his personality more clearly defined. He had not the qualities of heart and mind that make men great and history will never place his name among the illustrious; he was not an amiable nor a lovable character and he never will arouse the world's enthusiasm, but a careful study of his life will prove that he was not without some redeeming features and that he was not the unmitigated monster that he was once painted. He was a product of the eventful and exceptional times in which he lived.

CHAPTER III

BIRTH OF ROBESPIERRE — FAMILY — EDUCATION — COMES TO THE BAR

Maximilien Marie Isidore Robespierre was born May 6, 1758, at Arras in the province of Artois. There is a tradition that the family came originally from Ireland, the name of the first immigrant being Robert Spear.

Prior to the Revolution there was a *de* in the name, which suggests a noble origin; but beyond this there appears to be no proof nor sign of a patrician strain in the blood.

Maximilien was the eldest of four children, one of whom died in infancy. He had a brother, named Augustin, who went with him to the scaffold, and a sister, Charlotte, who survived him forty years.

His father, Maximilien Barthélemy François de Robespierre, was a lawyer who ruined himself by prodigality. He left France long before the Revolution to avoid his impatient and dunning creditors and opened a school at Cologne. Subsequently he went to England and some writers say settled at last in America. In his later years he kept his friends in ignorance as to his whereabouts and almost every trace of him was lost It is said that he died in Munich.

Robespierre's mother's maiden name was Jacqueline Carrault; she was the daughter of a brewer and died about 1768.

Young Maximilien was brought up by his maternal grandfather and by his aunts. The Bishop of Arras subsequently took him under his protection and in time had him entered as a bursar in the College of Louis le Grand at Paris. In this institution he made rapid progress in his studies and merited his promotions; he was most diligent as a student and gave promise of talent that was not altogether realized. At this early age he was diffident and secretive, but displayed at all times a proud and an independent spirit.

He was not the normal robust, rugged lad, full of fun and tussle, and consequently he took no part in the rough sports of the campus; in fact, he showed no inclination to indulge in any games. Among his schoolmates were Desmoulins, Fréron, and Le Brun.

One of the professors, an accomplished Latin scholar, took a special interest in Maximilien and imbued him with a lasting admiration for the ancients. The teacher was so impressed with the boy's love for equality and republicanism that he called him "The Roman."

He was the prize scholar of the school and, in 1775, when Louis XVI entered Paris, Robespierre was chosen by his fellow students to present their homage to the king.

He remained in this institution for ten years, and so correct had he been in his conduct, so assiduous in his studies, that at the time of his

graduation he was rewarded by a special commendation and a gift of 600 livres.

There was no part of his life devoted to what is called wild oat sowing.

Deciding upon the law as his profession, he returned to his native town and, after the required preparation, was admitted to the bar and straightway settled down to the duties of a village attorney. As he was too poor, at first, to pay rent for an office, he occupied a room in his uncle's house. He soon acquired the reputation of being a careful, painstaking lawyer and gave promise of developing into a brilliant advocate.

Even at this early period he was most particular in the matter of his dress; in fact, in the opinion of many of his staid townsmen, he was somewhat of a dandy and no doubt in this respect often provoked the sly criticisms of his country clients.

He was fond of birds and flowers and appeared to be a great lover of nature, often wandering for hours in the fields and woods in silent meditation.

Occasionally he indited a poem that called forth the unstinted admiration of the literary circle of the town, and, of course, the rhapsodies of its maidens.

He sought and obtained admission to membership in the Rosati Club, a literary society with more than a local reputation, for it was well known among cultured people throughout France. Carnot was also connected with the same association. It took its name from the fact

that roses were the prizes bestowed on successful competitors. When a new member was admitted to the club, he was presented with a rose, drank a toast in rosewater to his fellows, and recited a poem of his own composition. A picture of Robespierre, painted about this time in his life, represents him as a young man with a weak, simpering face, and dressed in the height of fashion, holding a rose in his hand.

Several of his poems, written at this period, are still in existence; but they possess small literary merit. His mind was not touched with the divine spark; the Revolution did not quench in him the ardor of a heart "pregnant with celestial fire."

In a literary contest, under the auspices of the Academy of Metz, he carried off the second premium, a gold medal. The subject of the essay which secured him this honor was: "*Quelle est l'origine du préjugé qui etend sur la famille d'un coupable, l'opprobre attaché aux peines qui ont été décernées contre lui? Le préjugé est il utile? Quéls seraint les mogens de le detruire?*" —"What is the origin of the prejudice which inflicts upon the families of criminals some stigma of their punishment, and what method should be adopted to destroy it?"

Robespierre eloquently maintained that the prejudice was barbarous and that as death by the scaffold, that is, decapitation by the headsman, was reserved wholly for criminal offenders of noble blood, the prejudice in a great measure could be done away with by removing all dis-

tinctions and declaring all citizens equal before the law. The following apt and scholarly quotation from Virgil was adopted by Robespierre as a motto for his essay: "*Quod genus hoc hominum quæve hunc tam barbara morem permittit patria.*" This selection may be taken as a fair index of his commanding knowledge of the classics.

He also received an honorable mention from the Academy of Amiens for a eulogy on Gresset, the celebrated author of Vert-Vert.

He had a nice literary taste, was fond of Racine, and loved to read his plays aloud. He also found much delight in the poems of Ossian, but his favorite author was Rousseau. Over the pages of that great philosopher he would hang for hours, imbibing peculiar and false principles of justice and equality, and mentally rearing upon the wildest theories of that dreamer an insubstantial ideal government for mankind. In 1778 he visited Rousseau at Ermenonville. From many points the interview must have been interesting, for the great master, among all his followers, never had a more devoted or more faithful disciple. "Robespierre was a thorough Puritan at heart," says Stephens, "and believed in the maxims of Rousseau as thoroughly as ever member of the Long Parliament believed in the Bible."

Although naturally shy and retiring, he was fond of the society of young women, but for some reason never mustered courage sufficient to take a wife. Michelet tells of a certain maiden of

Arras who swore she would espouse no one but Robespierre, but in his absence she forgot her ardent declaration and upon his return from a journey he found her married. He once wrote a gallant little poem dedicated to a young woman whom he addressed as *" belle Ophélie,"* but who she was is not known. There is a romantic story about his having had a tender affection in his later years for Eléonoré, the eldest daughter of Duplay, but it is without any substantial proof.

As we consider him, at this period of his life, when he was writing poetry, composing essays, competing for literary prizes, and laying the foundation of a law practice, who could believe that this little foppish visionary provincial lawyer would become, in the course of a few years, the leader of the Revolution during the days of the " Reign of Terror "? So tender-hearted was he at this time, that he actually wept over the death of a pet dove. He was appointed judge of the Criminal court, but was so affected by a capital sentence he was required to impose upon a prisoner, whose guilt was unquestioned, that he resigned the office.

An incident which occurred in his early professional career shows him to have been thankless and forgetful of past favors. A number of peasants, who complained of being oppressed by the Bishop of Arras, retained Robespierre to represent them in a suit. He accepted the case and fought it most zealously in its every stage. This was the real essence and substance of ingratitude; for, when he had been a waif, it was this

very bishop who had protected him and had procured his admission to the College of Louis le Grand. He was under life-long obligations to this generous benefactor, and one can conceive of no conditions that should have induced him to oppose his friend and former patron. His excuse, doubtless, was that there was a principle involved in the case, and that friendship should not restrain nor even influence a man in the discharge of an imperative duty. Such an excuse was not sufficient reason for his action in this case. Robespierre was just the man, controlled by the spirit of the fanatic, who would have sacrificed even friendship in the cause of some imaginary truth. The remembrance of past favors was never one of his virtues. There were other attorneys who could have taken the suit, the peasants could easily have secured representation, justice need not have gone begging.

Justin McCarthy puts a different phase upon this matter, and says that the bishop was so impressed with the ability shown by his *protégé* in his conduct of the case that he personally complimented and congratulated him. This was very generous on the part of the bishop, but it does not relieve the lawyer from the charge of ingratitude.

In 1783 Robespierre pleaded successfully in favor of the first Franklin lightning rod. M. Vissery, a well-known landowner in the province of Artois, had been an ambassador to the young American republic and, while in the new world, had investigated as to the use and safety of this

then remarkable invention. Upon his return to France he attached a rod to his dwelling. The clergy in the neighborhood aroused the fears and the superstition of the peasants by intimating that it was impious to provoke the wrath of God by attempting to direct or divert the course of His thunderbolts, and an effort was made to restrain the use of so wicked a contrivance. Robespierre was retained to represent the defendant and he won the suit. In the trial he proved that the king, Louis XVI, had erected a rod on one of his own castles. In the course of his argument he used the following remarkable language, remarkable in view of subsequent events: "This proof is undeniable and I call to witness the sentiments of the whole of France for a prince who is her pride and her glory."

In the library of the University of Pennsylvania is the following letter written by Robespierre to Benjamin Franklin, which accompanied a printed copy of the speech made by Robespierre in this case.

SIR: A sentence of proscription rendered by the magistrates of St. Omer against the use of electrical conductors has given me the opportunity of pleading before the council of Artois the cause of a sublime discovery, for which discovery mankind is indebted to you. The desire of aiding in eradicating the prejudices which oppose its progress in our province induced me to print the speech I made in the case. I dare to hope, my dear sir, that you will deign to accept with kindness a copy of this work, the object of which was to persuade my fellow citi-

zens to accept one of your benefactions; happy in having been able to be useful to my country in inducing its first magistrates to welcome this important discovery; still more happy if I can join to this advantage the honor of obtaining the approbation of a man of whom the least merit is that of being the most illustrious savant of the universe,

I have the honor to be with respect,

Monsieur,

Your very humble and very obedient servant,

DE ROBESPIERRE,

advocat au conseil d'Artois.

At Arras, 1 October, 1783.

In 1784 he represented a young girl who had been charged by a monk with having stolen a bag containing a large sum of money from the monastery of Saint Sauveur. Robespierre proved that the accusation was a wicked fabrication resulting from the monk's rage and disappointment, because he could not induce the girl to accede to dishonorable proposals. Robespierre's sister, in referring to his professional career, said that he was always ready to defend the oppressed, and that under no circumstances would he take a case that was without merit.

It will be seen that he was engaged in a fairly active practice, was retained in important suits, and was on the way to the leadership of his local bar.

Looked upon as a man of learning by his provincial neighbors, and with a growing reputation and practice as a lawyer, he occupied a posi-

tion that was to be envied. It was Cæsar who said he would rather be the first man in a village than the second in Rome. It was unfortunate for Robespierre that the Revolution disturbed his quietude and changed the current of his life.

CHAPTER IV

FRANCE — LOUIS XIII — LOUIS XIV — VERSAILLES — LOUIS XV — ACCESSION OF LOUIS XVI — THE CAUSES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION — TRANSFORMING PERIODS — RESULTS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

After the fall of the Roman empire, the Franks, a bold and hardy tribe of men from the north, a branch of the great Teutonic nation, overthrew the Gauls, assumed sway over Gallia and established in time the monarchy of France. The victors, as was usual in those days, imposed upon the vanquished a cruel servitude, which developed gradually into a harsh and well-defined system of feudalism.

A long and bitter struggle for supremacy ensued between the kings and the nobles and finally, under the administration of Richelieu, the able and adroit minister of Louis XIII, all power was centred in the monarch; but it was in the reign of Louis XIV that the absolutism of the king reached its full vigor.

Louis XIV was a remarkable character; he played the rôle of king with consummate skill, induced the devotion and reverence of his followers and the admiration and fear of his rivals and enemies. "No earthly sovereign could be

surrounded by greater state," says May, "or approached with deeper reverence."

As monarch he was absolute lord of the realm; the lives and the liberties of the citizens were in his hands and he looked upon the kingdom as his own personal estate. All power was concentrated in him; he exercised the sovereignty of government; his word was law; his wish had the force of a statute; he disbursed the taxes, made war and concluded peace, formed treaties, coined money, and regulated commerce. There was no legislative body between him and the people. The Parliament of France was a court of law, and its only office, in so far as legislation was concerned, was to register the king's decrees.

Versailles was not merely the residence of the king, but was also the centre of the empire. Here all the rays of power and glory focused; here were dispensed honors, privileges and pensions; and here were seen in dazzling splendor the pomp and magnificence of royalty. "The *fêtes* of Louis XVI," says Martin, "exceeded everything of which romancers had dreamed."

May 6, 1692, is a most important and memorable date in the history of France, for on this day the palace of Versailles was first occupied as the regal residence of the Great Louis. It was at this time that many of the nobility abandoned their *chateaux* and took up their abode at the court to be in daily attendance upon the king. Not only did they abandon their estates, but at the same time surrendered their freedom and in-

dependence, becoming mere lackeys and retainers of the king. While residing on their manors they had defended their tenants against invaders, had protected them from robbers, and in the manorial courts had settled their disputes; but the tie between the lord and his vassal was broken when the former took up his residence at the court and his absence from his manor transformed him from a generous patron into a selfish and an exacting master, for it required the collection of every sou due under his seignorial rights to maintain his extravagance at the seat of royalty.

Fabulous sums had been expended, considerably over 500,000,000 francs, in the erection of the palace at Versailles. Nothing of the kind approached it in magnificence since the days of the Golden House of Nero. Gardens, fountains, avenues, works of art, flower-covered terraces, made the place a fairy-land. It is impossible to estimate even approximately the enormous cost of all this beauty and splendor, for the king himself, startled, perhaps, at his own extravagance, destroyed the accounts.

In the palace were at least 10,000 persons and half as many more in the surrounding buildings in constant attendance upon the court. Dukes, peers of the realm, princes of the Church, put up with all sorts of inconveniences in order to form a part of the royal household and to wait upon the king. It was deemed an honor to tie his shoe, to adjust his cravat or to buckle on his

sword; the slightest service of this kind at the king's levees [1] carried with it distinction and a pension.

Balls, *fêtes,* festivities, to the exclusion of all else, occupied the days and the nights of the courtiers. Gambling was one of the principal amusements and fortunes were sometimes risked on the turn of a card. Often the king had to pay the losses of his favorites to prevent a public scandal.

Luxury and extravagance sapped the substance of the State and every day the gulf between the commonalty and the privileged classes grew wider and deeper.

It was Versailles that swallowed up the wealth of the realm, corrupted the nobility, and impoverished the people. The gentle and pious Fenelon, sick at heart because of the misery that prevailed everywhere throughout the kingdom, declared that France was "simply a great hospital full of woe and empty of food."

Of course, in the conflict that had been waged by the kings and the nobles for supremacy, the rights of the people had been crushed as between the upper and the nether mill-stone, and yet no people were ever more devotedly attached to their kings than the French. They distinguished them by designations such as the Wise, the Just, the Good, the Great and the most vicious of them all was called the Well-Beloved.

Louis XV was a voluptuary who would squander in a night's debauch the wealth of a province.

[1] See "Mirabeau and the French Revolution," p. 57.

Rome in her decline produced no emperors more dissolute in their habits and more capricious and arbitrary in their exercise of power. Though Caligula, Nero, Domitian, Commodus, and Caracalla were more cruel and sanguinary in disposition, they were not a whit more depraved in their tastes; in fact, Louis was not far removed from the class of rulers of which Heliogabalus is the type. Under his reign harlots swayed the rod of empire and ruled the destinies of France.

Upon Madame de Pompadour, who was not only his concubine but his procuress, he showered the wealth of the kingdom, and his gifts to Madame DuBarry, notwithstanding the demoralized condition of the finances, amounted to upwards of 175,000,000 livres in five years.

The settlement of grave political questions often depended upon his passing mood or mere caprice or the influence of his favorite mistress. In his hours of dalliance, she would coax and wheedle out of him titles, distinctions, and pensions, and then shower them with a lavish hand upon her friends, who in most instances had rendered the State no service and were totally unworthy of either honor or promotion. Statesmen, generals, cardinals, bishops, scholars, and men of letters followed fawningly in her train and were obsequious suppliants for her favors. Time-serving politicians, parlor soldiers, and unctuous prelates paid her homage and reached high station. Flattery and adulation, instead of worth and merit, were the means to win recognition and advancement.

The court was a nest of luxury, lechery, intrigue, frivolity, and vice; a refined and polished etiquette alone gave it the semblance of decency and virtue.

To maintain this profligacy and extravagance required an oppressive system of taxation, and the last sou was taken from the purses of the poor to replenish the national treasury. The peasant was ground down by a tyranny that consumed his very substance.

"He could not pay *gabelle* and tax
And feed his children, so he died.
. . . . . .
It is, you know, a common story,
Our children's food is eaten up
By courtiers, mistresses and glory."

The death of the king was the only opportunity for relief from this iniquitous rule, and at last, worn out by luxury, liquor, and harlots, Louis the "Well-Beloved" fell the victim of a fatal and loathsome disease, which disease, it is said, he contracted from a young girl brought to his bed to warm the blood of the wasted old *roué*.

After he was gone, the nation looked forward, with hope, to the reign of a prince who had the reputation of being virtuous and sympathetic.

Louis XVI,[1] during his grandfather's degrading reign, was affectionately named "*Le Desiré*." His accession was hailed with delight and as a happy and fortunate deliverance from the

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 55.

profligate and licentious rule of his predecessor; but, after coming to the throne, he failed to meet the expectations of his people, for although he was not vicious, he was utterly incompetent. "A king steeped in vices and immoralities might possibly have saved us," exclaimed Count de Tilly, "but we were fated to perish through a king whose weakness neutralized all his virtues." Although in favor of reforms he knew not how to effect them.

The extravagance of the new court impoverished the people and its scandals disgraced the nation as had those of the old. "Versailles," declared the king's brother, "has for some time past been a meeting place for scarlet women, intriguing priests, and servile noblemen." "The court of France," said the Emperor Joseph, the brother of Marie Antoinette, "is a gambling hell, and if they do not mend their ways the revolution will be cruel."

The courtiers hung like leeches on the body politic and sucked its very life-blood. Of one loan of 100,000,000 livres only 25,000,000 reached the public treasury, the complacent Calonne paying three-fourths of the whole amount to the courtiers. Such a drain upon the resources of a nation exhausted its strength, and the prudent statesmen of the realm appealed to the court to abate its extravagance, but luxury long continued cannot suddenly practice economy.

To make matters worse, not only had the nobility fallen to the lowest stage of demoralization,

but the clergy had kept pace with them in general depravity. The excesses openly indulged in by many of the members of the upper hierarchy brought the whole order into disrepute and in consequence the Church no longer exerted a moral influence. Philosophy led the way to revolution; religion, had it been undefiled, might have restrained its violence.

The political sky was full of portents, the clouds were scudding before the wind, and there was every indication of a coming storm. "We approach a condition of crises and an age of revolutions" had been the warning cry of Rousseau, but his prophecy was not heeded by the silly and thoughtless sycophants that surrounded the throne and the hour was now close at hand for its fulfillment.

It is a scriptural admonition that those who sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind. There can be no harvest without a seed-time, nor a convulsion without a cause.

The question as to the origin of the French Revolution has given rise to an almost interminable discussion. Historians, essayists, statesmen, politicians have argued the matter from every conceivable point of view and in many instances without coming to any definite conclusion. "History is the romance of nations more abundant in improbabilities," says Sardou, "than the most extravagant fairy tale, and the French Revolution stands out from the events, which from the beginning of time have perplexed the mind of man, a still unsolved problem."

The general diffusion of knowledge and the consequent enlightenment of the people created a desire for a freer and better system of government. The philosophers, having attacked the political institutions of the country and having by their liberal teachings destroyed in a great measure the influences of the Church, pointed the way to revolution. But the real inducing, provoking causes were the tyranny and despotism of centuries: — the galling yoke of feudalism, the corruption and extravagance of royalty, the insolence and arrogance of the privileged classes, the heavy burdens imposed under an unequal and unjust system of taxation, the venality of the courts, the inequality before the law, the disordered state of the finances, the impending bankruptcy and the failure of the crops with the attendant famine. Nor must we forget to mention in this connection the impetus given to the Revolution by the weak and vacillating character, conduct, and policy of Louis XVI.

The heroic struggle for independence made by the colonies in America against the mother country unquestionably had its influence. The spectacle of a people without resources bravely battling for freedom against a mighty empire, the suffering of ragged, bare-footed heroes

" Tramping the snow to coral where they trod "

and keeping a vigil for liberty during a dreary and a bitter winter in the cheerless camp at Valley Forge, aroused sympathy and enthusiasm among all classes and created a desire in

the hearts of Frenchmen to effect in their own land the establishment of liberal institutions. The founding of a republic in the new world seemed to be the realization of the hopes and the longings of the philosophers for an Arcadia, and France rejoiced almost as much as America in the successful issue of the conflict. Many of the young nobles had taken an active part in the struggle and, having aided in securing liberty for America, were impatient to aid in bestowing a like blessing on France.

In enumerating the causes we must include the comedies of Beaumarchais[1] and the affair known as that of the Diamond Necklace. They may be deemed as too light and trivial in character to have created any appreciable influence in effecting the Revolution, but they produced no inconsiderable impression on the public mind and aided in arousing a spirit of revolt.

Strange as it may appear, Free Masonry exerted a great influence in disseminating revolutionary sentiments.

The order's first lodge in France was founded in 1725 by an Englishman, Lord Derwentwater. The society, being secret in character, fell under the censure and disapprobation of the Church. Anathema and excommunication, however, did not prevent its rapid growth. It advocated and fostered the sentiment of the brotherhood of man. It gathered its membership from all classes of society. The Duke of Orleans, Egalité, was grand master and many of the most prominent

[1] See "Mirabeau and the French Revolution," p. 100.

CERTIFICATE OF MEMBERSHIP IN AN ENGLISH LODGE OF MASONS OF JEAN PAUL MARAT

From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.

men in France were members of the society. Marat, while living in London, was initiated into the order and upon his return to Paris had his membership transferred to a French lodge. The order taught doctrines that were not only anti-clerical, but also anti-monarchical, and did much missionary work in the cause of political liberty.

Of course, it is a difficult task to trace the immediate producing cause of the Revolution, but we can unhesitatingly say that all of the foregoing were the causes which in combination brought about the result. If we are to be guided in our judgment by the examples of history, there was present every symptom that presaged a political Revolution.

People do not revolt from a mere wish to effect a change in the form and character of government; revolutions do not occur from mere fickleness, but from impatience caused by misrule and tyranny. The French Revolution was not a fortuitous event, it happened not by chance, it was not an accident; it was the result of many and deep-seated wrongs. "What is the Revolution," says Michelet, "but the equity, the tardy advent of eternal justice."

To be sure, it came as a surprise, and yet by some it had been expected. Many generations had been at work laboring to effect it and making preparations for its arrival. The seers and the philosophers had predicted it. D'Argenson, Voltaire, Rousseau, Lord Chesterfield and Mirabeau gave warning of its coming. Louis XV foretold the deluge and Maria Theresa hoped it would not

overwhelm her daughter. "The realm is in a sore way," declared the physician of Madame de Pompadour; "it will never be cured without a great internal commotion; but woe to those who have to do with it, into such work the French go with no slack hand." Here was a warning, says Morley, under the very roof of the royal palace.

But no one foresaw the terrific force the Revolution would exert. Who could have foretold, even so late as in the reign of Louis XV, that a revolution was at hand that would destroy the whole fabric of the old monarchy and every feature of the ancient *régime?* In so far as the ruling classes were concerned, the only reason for the calling of the States-General was to relieve the financial situation, to provide against the deficit; and if no remedy could be found the deputies were to be summarily sent about their business. There seemed no danger threatening the stability of the empire; even the most sanguine reformers hoped only to make the monarchy constitutional; there was no thought of its destruction.

Although France had been oppressed for centuries by a grievous tyranny, there had been a slow but nevertheless a perceptible improvement from age to age in her social and political conditions. Her people were more enlightened as a class and her peasants, perhaps, were a degree less wretched and degraded than those of the other continental nations. Rotten and corrupt as the State was, yet Arthur Young, a most observant traveler, during his sojourn in France just on the eve of the Revolution, remarked,

that with the exception of England, it was the mildest government of any considerable country in Europe.

In every well-constituted state or community, revolutions are always going on; it is a sure sign of health, motion is life, stagnation is death. "God has pronounced his curse," says Goethe, "on everything that changeth not." A desire for improvement is a proof of civilization. Oriental history is but the monotonous succession of tyrants and the continuance of tyranny. There is present no persistent effort nor struggle for liberty, there is no appreciation of the force of law. The rulers concentrate in themselves all power and this by the subject is accepted complacently as a natural and reasonable condition. The people have the patience and the docility of the ox. They would rather bear the burden of slavery than make the effort that is required to secure freedom. Such a society is not historical but merely vegetative.

There was a time in France, prior to the Revolution, when a condition existed closely approaching that we have just described; when the tyranny of the king made the subject a serf, when the monarch, sybaritic in his tastes, indulged in the sensuous luxury of the Orient, and at the same time exercised his authority as arbitrarily as the most absolute potentate that ever ruled in the East.

In time, however, the people, chafing under this system, grew restless and asserted their power. It was the continued tyranny of the

kings and the ruling classes from reign to reign that provoked the wrath of the people. It was the oppression of tyrants that made the liberty of man imperative and possible. It was the impatience of suffering that, at last, caused the Revolution. If there had been more liberal concessions to meet conditions during the reigns of the Bourbon princes, the Revolution might have been effected without the terrific convulsion that accompanied it. Indeed, if Louis XVI had been a wise and resolute ruler, one who had adopted a fair and liberal policy, had known how to make concessions, relieve burdens, and effect reforms, the " Reign of Terror " might have been avoided. It is a grave question, however, whether ultimately mankind would have received as much benefit from a peaceful or moderate revolution as from a violent one.

The time had come when the people demanded a settlement for the wrongs they had suffered. The burdens were so heavy and the tyranny had been so long-continued, that it was the accumulation of the forces in opposition and their restraint and confinement that caused the violence of the explosion. Because of their sufferings, men had the "*semen martyrum*" planted in their hearts, and were willing to sacrifice their lives in defence of their cherished principles. With the increase of enlightenment there had developed a spirit of resolution and courage. " Men were in that frightful condition," says Buckle, " when the progress of intellect outstrips the progress of lib-

erty, and when a desire is felt not only to remove a tyranny but also to avenge an insult."

The world's advance has been marked by great historical epochs that may be designated as transforming periods: such, for example, as the espousal in the fourth century of the Christian religion by the Emperor Constantine that resulted in the passing of paganism; the fall of the Western Roman empire when the hardy barbarians from the north overthrew her power and changed the civilization of Europe by the introduction of new customs, conditions, and races; the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in the fifteenth century that dispersed the learned men of the East and thus disseminated the literature and culture of the ancients throughout the western world. The Renaissance in art and the Reformation in religion must also be grouped in this class. The French Revolution may be added to this list, but it differs from the others in that it was not an event but a continuing condition. It had no definite beginning and no definite end; it cannot be circumscribed by time limitations; with its causes it extended far into the past and with its results it still reaches indefinitely into the future. Its crimes and excesses were but the natural avenging of past monstrous wrongs, a reaction against the cruelty and tyranny of ages. Morley calls it "the battle of freedom against thirteen centuries of despotism." It was a conflict between the absolutism of kings and the sovereignty of the people; an

impassioned effort to secure the equality of man. The struggle of the opposing forces was terrific and necessarily became confused and chaotic, but out of this condition were evolved, in time, the blessings of justice and liberty. Burk says it is "the reciprocal struggle of discordant powers that draws forth the harmony of the universe." "Out of this chaos of shadow and this stormy flight of clouds," cries Victor Hugo, "shone immense rays of light parallel to the eternal laws."

Although in the name of the principles of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity the most atrocious crimes were committed, we must not confound these excesses with the true spirit and aims of the Revolution. The principles for which the French contended in 1789 were the same as those for which our fathers fought in 1776. It is this sentiment alone that invokes our sympathy in behalf of this great struggle. To be fair we must, therefore, as we have elsewhere observed, judge it not only by its violence and outrages, but also by its results. Compare, if you will, the political conditions of Europe prior to the Revolution with those subsequent thereto, and then answer the questions as to whether or not it was a necessity and whether or not it accomplished any good.

"That the French Revolution," says Morley, "led to an immense augmentation of happiness, both for the French and for mankind, cannot be denied." "It swept away," says De Tocqueville, "the feudal institutions and replaced them with a social and political order more uniform and

simple, and based upon the principles of the equality of all before the law." Its influence was felt not only in France, but throughout the world; and from it may be dated the freedom in thought and government of modern times. "When the Convention declared: 'The liberty of one citizen ends where the liberty of another citizen begins,' it summed up in a simple axiom the whole law of human society."

CHAPTER V

THE NOBILITY — SUFFERING OF THE PEOPLE — THE REVEILLON INCIDENT — NECKER URGES CALLING OF STATES-GENERAL — KING CALLS STATES-GENERAL — THE NOTABLES — ELECTION OF DEPUTIES — ROBESPIERRE CHOSEN DEPUTY FROM ARRAS.

As has already been said, under Louis XV and Louis XVI things had been going from bad to worse. The whole nation was in a state of excitement and all joined in denouncing the abuses, the profligacy, and the extravagance of the court. The country was bankrupt. Every conceivable method of taxation to increase the revenues and to provide against a deficiency had been tried, but without avail.

Ministers endeavored to find a mistake in the columns of the accounts, but all kinds of twisting could not conceal the fact that the annual deficit was increasing. Statement after statement was issued to appease the anxiety of the public, but no amount of arithmetical calculation could hide the truth. A witty counselor, punning on the word "*états*" — statements — said: "*Ce ne sont pas des états, mais des états generaux qu 'il nous faut*" — "It is not statements but States-General that we need."

It would seem reasonable to suppose that the nobility, in the face of the existing conditions, would have been willing to make concessions; that they would have been wise, patriotic, and sympathetic enough even to sacrifice some of their privileges; but the moment they were called upon to abate, relinquish, or destroy some of the prevailing abuses, abuses which, like a cancer, had for generations been eating into the vitals of the nation, they resented the interference. They were mainly responsible for the evils and it was their duty to aid in suppressing them, but they had abandoned themselves so absolutely to pleasure that they had lost all sense of public responsibility. So long had they continued in this course without restraint that time seemed to have sanctioned their right of indulgence, and any interference with it by the public was deemed by them unreasonable and without warrant.

Their greed had so multiplied the burdens of the people that the day of reckoning was rapidly approaching, but with a blindness born of obstinacy and selfishness they could not, or would not, read the signs of coming doom. Although the tempest was about to break, they would not have their peace of mind disturbed, nor their amusements interrupted. The gay and rollicking courtiers, wallowing in pleasure, squandering the public revenues, drawing extravagantly against the civil list, heeding no advice, insolently ignoring public opinion, turned a deaf ear to all prognostications.

The winter of '88 and '89 was one of unusual

severity in France, the coldest season since 1709, and it produced great suffering throughout the kingdom. This added to the general distress and strengthened the demands for immediate relief. In Paris the mob began to grow ugly in temper. Vast multitudes of the unemployed, pinched by cold and hunger, marched through the streets of the city clamoring for bread.

Reveillon,[1] a prominent manufacturer of wall paper, whose factory was located in the faubourg Saint Antoine, was reported to have said that a working man and his family could live on fifteen sous a day; and in consequence of this alleged contemptuous remark his factory was destroyed, and his house sacked by an angry mob. This event is described by many writers as the curtain-raiser in the great drama of the Revolution.

Necker, for some time back, had been using his influence to induce the king to call a meeting of the States-General. "Appointed minister in order to find money for the court, Necker made use of the wants of the court to procure liberties for the people." At last the king consented to call together the representatives of the three estates: the First Estate comprising the nobles, the Second Estate including the clergy, and the Third Estate embracing the people.

When that decision was made known, the entire country seemed to feel the thrill of a new life, and the inspiration of a fresh hope.

The Third Estate possessed but a third part of the land, but it had given far more than its

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 54.

fair share to support the splendor of the court and the glory of the nation. It had paid rents and rendered feudal services to the lords of the manor, had paid tithes to the clergy, and taxes to the king; but it had enjoyed no political rights, had been admitted to no public employment. Now, however, the people, the so-called common people, who for centuries had borne the burdens without being allotted any share in the administration of the government, were at last to be advised with as to the adoption of remedies to provide relief.

There had been a meeting of the Notables in February, 1787, and again in November, 1788, and although the sessions had not been productive of any appreciable beneficial results, the investigations and deliberations had revealed to the country at large a sad state of affairs.

Mirabeau, at the time of the calling of this aristocratic body, wrote to Talleyrand that it was the happiest day of his life, for he thought the meeting would certainly result in the summoning of the States-General.

The first French monarch who convoked this representative congress was Philip le Bel, in 1303. It will thus be seen that it was a time-honored institution, so far as its age was concerned, but it had been studiously neglected for a long period of years. There had been no meeting since 1614, in the reign of Louis XIII, and that convention had been memorable in that it marked the first appearance in the political arena of a young priest named Richelieu, who had

been chosen by the clergy to present their memorial. When, in the course of the proceedings, a deputy of the Third Estate spoke of the nation as one family, in which the nobles were the elder brothers, and the commons the younger, he was rebuked for his impertinence. "It is a great insolence to try to establish any sort of equality betwen us and them," said the president of the nobles. "They are to us as a valet to his master." One hundred and seventy-five years had gone by since that demeaning remark had been so quietly accepted by the commons, and conditions had changed.

The elections aroused the greatest enthusiasm throughout the country. Every province was thrown into a swirl of excitement. All the features of a spirited campaign were brought into play — bonfires, banners, processions, public meetings, political orations, everything that could produce an effect.

There were 1,275 deputies to be chosen throughout the kingdom, and of this number the people were entitled to one-half, making the representation of the commons equal to that of the nobility and the clergy combined.

Every taxpayer was entitled to a vote, and this provision placed the ballot in the hands of five million men, who, up to this time, had been politically dead. It was like touching a corpse and bringing it to life. The nobles, through their agents, resorted to every electioneering device to induce the people to support their candidates, but it was of no use; it was an opportunity

the commons did not intend to lose, and the flattery and cajolery of the nobility could not efface the recollection of their former pride and arrogance. Even the humble *curé* took a sly thrust at the luxurious bishop. It was the season for the settling of old scores.

Fraudulent personation, repeating, ballot-box stuffing, and false counting were practiced as in a modern political election. Indeed, Mirabeau, who stood as a candidate in both Marseilles and Aix, decided to accept his credentials from the smaller and less important town for fear a contest, which was threatened by his rivals and enemies in Marseilles, might reveal a condition of irregularities that would jeopardize his chances all around.

The little town of Arras, in the province of Artois, had, in the opinion of its electors, no citizen who seemed so fully equipped to meet the demands of the hour as Robespierre. It was contended by his supporters that he was learned in the law, familiar with the writings of the philosophers, devoted to the interests of the people, and outspoken in his denunciation of the abuses in both Church and State. A paper he had written on *Lettres de Cachet* had given him quite a reputation in his district as a political author. He published besides two electoral pamphlets and drew up the *cahier* of the cobblers of Arras. His election was secured after a spirited contest, and he was returned to the States-General as fifth deputy for the Third Estate of the province of Artois.

There was no province in the whole kingdom where feudalism flourished more vigorously than in Artois, and consequently no locality that formed more fervent partisans of liberty. To the nobles or the Church in this particular district belonged nearly all the land, and the peasants were made to feel the full rigor of a vicious system that was enforced by exacting masters.

When Robespierre announced himself as a candidate of the Third Estate, he was stigmatized by the clericals as an ingrate and a renegade, and when he took his seat as a deputy in the States-General "he still found Arras," says Michelet, "on the benches of the Assembly; that is to say, the lasting hatred of the prelates towards their *protégé*, and the contempt of the lords of Artois for an advocate brought up by charity, and now sitting by their side."

When it was proposed to arm the common people with the right of suffrage, the narrow and intolerant Bourbon of course stood aghast at the very thought of such a thing, for he believed they were not sufficiently educated to exercise the right intelligently, and consequently would do the State much damage. In reality, the most remarkable feature of the enfranchisement was the discrimination shown by the commons in the selection of their representatives. Not only did they send able men to the States-General, but men who were loyal and devoted to the popular cause. The reforms effected by the deputies of the Third Estate in the early sessions of the National Assembly proved not only

their fidelity to their constituents, but also their ability as reformers and statesmen. A greater work in relieving an oppressed people of their burdens was never done in the same space of time by any legislative body in the history of the world.

CHAPTER VI

MEETING OF THE STATES-GENERAL — ROBESPIERRE AND MIRABEAU — ROBESPIERRE REPLIES TO THE BISHOP — DELEGATES OF THE THIRD ESTATE DECLARE THEMSELVES THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY — SIEYÈS — OATH OF THE TENNIS COURT — MOUNIER — ROYAL SITTING — MIRABEAU DEFIES THE ORDER OF THE KING.

On the 4th of May, 1789, the delegates to the States-General marched in procession through the streets of Versailles from the Church of Notre Dame to the Church of Saint Louis. It was Sunday and all Paris came to witness the ceremony. Gorgeous, indeed, was the scene. No expense was spared in making it an occasion ever to be remembered for its pomp and splendor. The little town, the favorite seat of royalty, had never presented so brilliant an appearance. Te Deums were sung, and the air, burdened with incense and the perfume of flowers, quivered and reverberated with cheers and plaudits for the king.

In all that vast concourse of people, there was no person, perhaps, who attracted less attention than the little deputy from Arras. Slight in figure, unprepossessing in appearance, wearing green spectacles, and clad in the plain and sombre garb of the commons, he was not the individual

upon such an occasion and surrounded by so many well-known and distinguished men to attract special notice. It may be said, however, that no one among all his colleagues felt to a higher degree the importance of his mission or had a greater desire to render a faithful stewardship.

Who is that haughty man stepping along with the stride of a king, with head high in air and thrown back as if in contempt, a sneer upon his ugly rugged face, his bushy hair waving in the wind like the tawny mane of a lion, at whom every finger is pointed, greeted at times with faint cheers and then assailed with low growls? That is Mirabeau, le Comte de Mirabeau, deputy of the Third Estate from the town of Aix, known throughout the kingdom and even elsewhere for his extravagance, profligacy, and genius. Entitled by birth and rank to walk with the nobles, but driven from their midst, he has thrown his lot in with the commoners, and a tower of strength he will be to their cause. Great is his reputation, but the real power of the giant is not yet known.

These were two distinct types among the deputies of the Third Estate, and between them ranged men of every degree: lawyers, doctors, merchants, land-owners, farmers, priests, magistrates, mayors of towns, and a few who had no vocations but were classed as gentlemen. These were the representatives of the people, the great majority of them undistinguished, even unknown; only a few had reputations beyond the limits of

their respective districts. Little did they, at this time, comprehend their power, and little did they foresee that they were to assail the abuses of the ancient *régime* and that under their blows the old established system was to crumble to pieces and that on this mass of rubbish they were to lay the foundations of a new constitution.

On the 5th of May the first session of the States-General was held. The king read his speech, and at its conclusion put on his hat; the nobility in accordance with a time-honored custom also covered their heads. And then the Third Estate, in defiance of a rule of royal etiquette that had obtained from time immemorial, followed suit. It was a law as old as the empire itself that the subject must stand uncovered in the presence of his king and the breach of this law was deemed insolent and rebellious. The indignation of the nobles waxed hot at this effrontery on the part of the commons, and the cry rang through the hall "Hats off." To relieve the situation, Louis uncovered and the Convention resumed order.

The nobles and the clergy then refused to meet with the Third Estate in joint session. This obstinacy was defeating the real purpose of the calling of the States-General. Instead of the whole nation advising together in one body, the privileged classes insisted upon holding two separate and distinct conventions or what they might have designated as an upper and a lower house. Although the clergy met in a hall by themselves,

it was believed they would vote as a body upon all important questions with the nobility.

The nobles contended that each order should be entitled to one vote, whereas the commons insisted upon voting by poll. This quarrel kept everything at a standstill for five weeks.

It had been the ancient custom of the body to vote upon all questions by orders, and believing that this custom would prevail in the new congress the king and his advisers had been induced to allow the Third Estate to send to Versailles more representatives than the nobility and the clergy combined; but now the commons, appreciating the fact that they would be out-voted if the old custom obtained, demanded that the three orders should meet together and that the voting should be by individuals.

The nobles were not all of one mind on this question of separate sessions, for some of the most distinguished men in their ranks favored the union of the three orders.

Many of the clergy, too, endorsed the stand taken by the commons, and impatiently awaited the time when they could act in accordance with their views and openly declare their preference.

As a rule the bishops were closely affiliated with the nobility, many of them being of noble birth; these patrician prelates carried their notions of exclusiveness and social superiority into their religious life and, of course, looked with an indifference that was akin to contempt upon the humble members of the lower clergy. These, in

turn, had but little respect for their haughty superiors and were at heart in close and sympathetic touch with their brothers of the Third Estate.

In the latter part of May, Mirabeau, after a great speech, moved the appointment of a committee to visit the clergy and appeal to them, in the name of God, to throw aside prejudice and to meet in common with the Third Estate to consider the interests and the welfare of France. When the committee appealed to the clergy, it was as much as the bishops could do to prevent a stampede from their ranks, and to avoid it they forced an adjournment.

A month had gone by since the first meeting of the States-General, and the orders were no closer together than they had been at the start. At this time, a bishop, clad in his purple, entered the hall of the Third Estate and after eloquently and pathetically commenting upon the miseries of the poor, proposed that the commons, as a separate order, should unite with the clergy to provide succor for the starving. The purpose of this appeal was very evident; it was simply an effort under a cry of distress to induce the commons to recede from their position by holding a joint session with the clergy. It was a political trick played under the cloak of charity. For a few moments the hall was silent; no one ventured a reply, for it would not have been prudent to ignore an appeal that had for its ostensible purpose the relief of the suffering. Just then, at the point where the deputies were wav-

ering between policy and principle, a young man rose in his place and was recognized as the member from Arras. "Go and tell your colleagues," he said, addressing the bishop, "that we cannot be persuaded to abandon the position we have taken; that if they so desire they can throw aside their flimsy excuses, dismiss their prejudices, and unite with us in conference, and then together we can consider and provide for the miseries of the poor. We must refer them to the principles of the primitive Church. The ancient canons authorized them to sell even the sacred vessels for the relief of the destitute; but happily that sacrifice is not required. It is necessary only that the bishops should renounce their luxury, dismiss their carriages, their horses and the insolent lackeys who attend them; to sell if need be a fourth of the ecclesiastical property." This was a well-conceived and well-timed speech, and the bishop retired without further ado.

M. Dumont, who relates this incident in his "Recollections of Mirabeau," says that the speech was received with approbation and many of the delegates asked: "Who is the speaker?" for, at this time, he was not well known, but the name of Robespierre at once passed from mouth to mouth.

All sorts of compromises were submitted and considered, but the dead-lock continued. At last on June 17, 1789, the Third Estate, tired of waiting, cut the Gordian knot by declaring itself the National Assembly, thus assuming the functions of sovereign power, as did the Long Parliament

in the reign of Charles I when it disregarded both the throne and the nobility. Louis Blanc declares that, after this bold *coup,* "Royalty was no longer in the palace of Louis XVI; it was in the *Salle des Etats.*" It is said, too, that this plan received the cordial approval of Jefferson who, at that time, was in France and whose political acumen was recognized abroad as well as at home.

The Abbé Sieyès, upon whose motion this question was carried, was a shrewd-faced man of crafty mien, who, even in the garb of the commons, could not altogether conceal his clerical appearance. More philosopher than priest, too liberal in his views for the Church, the clergy refused to send him as a delegate to the Convention; but so well known were his opinions on public questions that he was enthusiastically chosen by the Third Estate. With the fine, subtle intellect of the metaphysician, he was withal a keen, practical politician and served the popular cause conspicuously during the early period of the Revolution. Long before the "Reign of Terror," he withdrew from the public eye and took shelter in obscurity. Therein he showed his wisdom, for had he remained upon the scene and taken an active part he would assuredly have gone to the scaffold. He became one of the Consulate with Napoleon.

Robespierre bitterly opposed him and his faction and sneeringly called him a mole; he returned the compliment by designating Robespierre as a tiger.

The adoption of Sieyès' motion, that the deputies of the Third Estate should constitute the National Assembly, was one of the most heroic and one of the most important historical events of that period. His speech in support of his views on the question was a clear and masterly argument, and was persuasive and convincing even against the impassioned eloquence of Mirabeau. He summed up the whole matter in a nut-shell when he asserted that the Third Estate was the French nation minus the clergy and the nobles.

Upon the organization of the National Assembly, the nobles and the clericals were invited to join with the commons, and they were given to understand that if they did not accept the invitation the Assembly would proceed to the consideration of public affairs without them.

On the 20th of June, 1789, the deputies of the Assembly took what is known as the oath of the Tennis Court, by which they solemnly swore "never to separate and to assemble whenever circumstances shall require till the constitution of the kingdom be established and founded on a solid basis."

These two events, the organization of the National Assembly, and the vow taken never to separate until the adoption of the Constitution, effected the legislative revolution.

Jean Joseph Mounier, upon whose motion the pledge had been taken, was a deputy from Grenoble who brought to Paris a reputation as one of the ablest lawyers in the kingdom. As a student of the fundamental principles and sys-

tems of government, familiar especially with the features of the English constitution, much was expected from him in the way of suggesting reforms and effecting those changes so essentially important at that time, but he failed to meet the expectations of his admirers. Wanting in those qualities of mind that shine and dazzle, and being without ambition and qualification for political leadership, he failed to attract the attention and to reach the commanding position his real merit deserved. Barnave, who as a disciple sat at his feet in Grenoble, rose head and shoulders above his master in the capital. The Revolution in its early stages was bent on destruction, the time for building up did not come until later, and Mounier appeared on the scene in advance of the period when his learning and talents would have been useful and pre-eminent. Stronger men for the work at hand pushed him aside and gradually his light paled in the glare of the fierce fires of the Revolution and he quietly withdrew from the conflict.

A royal sitting on June 22nd, authorized by the king, brought the orders no closer together in purpose and sentiment. Indeed, because of the insolence of the nobility, it resulted only in driving them further apart. The king's speech upon the occasion was thought to be too energetic in character to emanate from his weakness and amiability, and it only aroused the indignation of the deputies to feel that he had been made the mere mouth-piece of his aristocratic advisers. There was no tone of moderation in the ad-

dress; it was full of commands, and declared emphatically in favor of the maintenance of feudal rights as an inviolable institution.

At the conclusion of the sitting the king ordered the Assembly to separate immediately. The nobility and part of the clergy, in compliance with his direction, filed out of the hall at once, but a majority of the ecclesiastical members remained with the commons.

The king's messenger appeared with the royal command and ordered the deputies to disperse, but Mirabeau told the flunkey to go tell his master that the delegates were assembled by the will of the people, and that only force could drive them hence.

Some of the hot-headed courtiers urged the king to resort to the bayonet, but wiser heads counseled moderation. It was too late to intimidate with cold steel. Paris already was wild with excitement, and the Palais Royal was ringing with rumors and seething with sedition. The Assembly, upon motion of Mirabeau, declared its members inviolable and decreed the punishment of death upon those who should dare to lay violent hands upon the representatives of the people.

The Revolution now was surging on with an irresistible force. The nobility and the hierarchy, still clinging to their old idols, were being swept along on the torrent, and every attempt they made to check its speed only gave it a fresh impulse.

On the 27th of June, the king, receding from

his former position, surrendered to the people by directing the orders to unite.

When the nobility came in a body to the hall of the commons, President Bailly in the exuberance of his joy exclaimed: "This day will be illustrious in our annals, for it makes the family complete."

There was public rejoicing over the union of the three orders, for it was now believed that the work of regeneration would begin in earnest. But the period of rejoicing was of short duration, for it was soon discovered that Louis, as usual, was playing fast and loose.

CHAPTER VII

ARREST AND RELEASE OF THE FRENCH GUARDS — DISMISSAL OF NECKER — FALL OF THE BASTILE — MURDER OF DE FLESSELES, DELAUNAY, FOULON, BERTHIER.

The military men about the court fumed and fretted and threatened, rattled their sabres, swore great oaths, and strutted around with a pompous, belligerent energy that was amusing if not alarming. They urged the king to quell the rising tumult by striking a blow, but they were reckoning without their host. The insurrectionary spirit already possessed the army. Bands of drunken soldiers paraded the streets cheering for the Third Estate. Some of the French Guards had declared that they would not fire upon the people, and openly announced their allegiance to the Assembly.

The officers in the army were all royalists, while the soldiers of the line were of the common people. The gulf between them was wide and deep. A private soldier, no matter how great might be his merit, could never expect promotion; born of the people he died in the ranks. The officers, few in number compared with the soldiers, had a budget that was 2,000,000 francs in

excess of the amount paid to the soldiers of the entire army.

Du Châtelet, colonel of the French Guards, in order to make an example of those soldiers who evinced a revolutionary spirit, sent eleven of them to the Abbaye, and for further punishment, decided to remove them to the Bicêtre, a prison where the vilest criminals were confined, associated in the public mind with every feature of cruelty and torture.

On the day when they were to be transferred, a young man mounted a chair in the garden of the Palais Royal, and addressing the multitude said: "Citizens! Are we to stand idly by and deny aid to the soldiers whose only crime is that they refused to fire upon the people? To the Abbaye!" His words rang through the garden until all the people took up the refrain and shouted in chorus, "To the Abbaye!"

The name of the young orator who thus aroused the people has not been handed down in history, although his appeal was only one degree less in importance than the cry of Camille Desmoulins that precipitated the capture of the Bastile.

The crowd quickly formed and started for the prison. Soldiers offered their services; but the people, thanking them, decided to accomplish the task alone. As the procession moved along, its numbers increased every step of the way; sturdy workmen armed with iron bars joined the crowd, and when the gaol was reached the wicket was beaten down, the great doors were forced, and the

prisoners were set free. As the crowd in triumph came out of the prison yard, they met a body of hussars charging at full gallop with swords drawn. The people seized the bridles of the horses, and explained to the troopers their work of deliverance. The hussars forthwith sheathed their swords, removed their helmets, and fraternized with the people; wine was brought and all drank to the king and the nation, for at this period the people believed the king was loyal but that he was wrongly influenced and misled by his advisers. The crowd conducted the prisoners to the Palais Royal, feasted and toasted them amidst song and shout, and when the night was far spent lodged them until morning in the Théatre des Variétés.

In these tumultuous scenes of the great and rapidly moving drama of the Revolution, Robespierre appears to have played no conspicuous part, but he was closely watching events and learning those lessons that were to enable him to fill the prominent rôle he was yet to assume. During this period, however, he did all in his power to impress the Assembly with his oratory. There were few questions considered in the discussion of which he did not take part.

When Versailles heard the news from Paris it stood aghast. The king, distracted by conflicting advice, at last declared that if the released prisoners were returned to the Abbaye he might pardon them. This decision was unsatisfactory to the people, so they marched to the Town Hall and demanded that the electors should journey

to Versailles and intercede with the king to give an immediate order for the release of the prisoners. The electors promised to start at once on their mission, and declared they would not return to Paris without the king's pardon. The prisoners were soon at large.

Under the persuasion of his advisers, Louis at last decided to resort to warlike measures and troops carefully chosen from the foreign mercenaries were posted in commanding positions between Versailles and Paris, the bridges seized, and arrangements made to beleaguer the capital.

The king, having no appreciation of the public temper, further added to the general discontent by summarily dismissing Necker. While the minister was entertaining some friends at dinner about three o'clock in the afternoon of July 11th, he received, much to his amazement, the royal command for his instant departure. Taking his wife aside, he read her the order and, without informing his guests of the news or even stopping long enough to bid them good-bye, he entered a carriage with his wife and drove hastily out of France, taking the shortest road into the Netherlands.

When the report of the dismissal of Necker, who at this time was the most popular man in the country, reached Paris, the city was thrown into a tumult. It was Sunday and the people were abroad in numbers. At first they would not believe the news, but messenger after messenger arrived at the Palais Royal bearing the same tidings, and the indignation increased at

every confirmation of the report. But, when it was announced that a new cabinet had been formed with Bréteuil, de Broglie, and Foulon as ministers, the public fury knew no bounds. It was then that Camille Desmoulins sprang into notoriety by calling the people to arms, and his impassioned words, leaping from lip to lip, echoed in every quarter of the city.

The night was one of terror and suspense, for the citizens believed that Paris would be in the possession of the king's troops before the morning dawned; barricades were hastily thrown up, the tocsin was sounded at intervals, and an occasional shot was heard. The barriers were in a blaze and everywhere resounded the ringing of hammers on anvils as rude pikes were beaten into shape for the impatient patriots.

The Bastile fell on July 14, 1789.[1] In the assault upon this prison there were many prominent citizens in the attacking party, but there is no evidence that Robespierre was present even as a spectator. It is almost impossible to imagine him leading a mob or taking an active part in work so desperate; although no one rejoiced over the result more than he did. He recognized the fact that the Revolution had to be made by force and he would have had no hesitation in instigating a riot, but there is nothing on record to show that he ever led one.

There had always been something mysterious about this gloomy fortress that stood like a menace frowning upon the city, scowling espe-

[1] See "Mirabeau and the French Revolution," p. 270.

cially upon the turbulent and seditious faubourgs. *"Elle écrasait la rue Saint Antoine."*

Children did not stop to play near it and at night the belated citizen hastened his steps as he passed its frowning walls and felt safer when he was beyond its shadow. No one thought or spoke of it without a curse in his heart.

It was not a common prison for everyday malefactors; one had to be of a certain rank or distinction to be incarcerated within its dungeons. All sorts of romantic stories were told about its inmates, who had been imprisoned for political offenses by *lettres de cachet* and without trial. Bastards who claimed the right to succession, mistresses who had grown out of favor, authors who had expressed themselves too liberally — Voltaire himself was confined on this account — men and women holding state secrets, had languished in its cells. It held the victims of wanton and capricious tyranny. One inmate who had given a useful invention to the navy was immured for fear he might make it known elsewhere; as a reward for his patriotic service France assigned him a dungeon. The Bastile was attacked, not because it was a prison, but for the reason that it symbolized the arbitrary power of kings.

There had been a general gaol delivery at the time of the coronation of Louis XVI, so there were fewer prisoners during his reign and the discipline was perhaps less cruel and rigorous than it had been in the past; but the people were angered by the remembrance of prior wrongs.

When the fortress was taken there were found only seven persons confined within its walls. One of these who had gone insane during his term of imprisonment, could give no account of his original commitment and, as there was no record kept of it, the history of the man and his crime could not be ascertained. Another prisoner, whose beard reached his waist, inquired about the health of Louis XV, believing that he was still the reigning king.

In a cell was discovered a letter, written and dated thirty-seven years before, which read: "If for my consolation Monseigneur would grant me for the sake of God and the blessed Trinity that I could have news of my dear wife, were it only her name on a card to show that she is alive, I shall forever bless the greatness of Monseigneur." This letter evidently was not delivered; the wail from the tomb was never answered, but remained as an echo of a broken heart.

So elated were the people at the liberation of the prisoners, that the latter were carried through the streets in triumph on the shoulders of stalwart men. Everywhere citizens congratulated each other on the taking of the grim old dungeon. Its destruction caused general rejoicing. Champfort, while watching its demolition, wittily remarked that "while it goes on disappearing it grows more beautiful." When news of its fall reached England, Fox exclaimed: "How much is this the greatest event that ever happened in the world and how much the best!"

The key was sent by La Fayette to Washington at Mount Vernon, where it remains as a relic to this day, "a trophy of the spoils of despotism."

After the storming and capture of the old fortress, the king came to Paris, wore the cockade of the Revolution, waved his hat from the windows of the *Hotel de Ville* to the crowds in the streets below, and was greeted with enthusiastic applause. He surrendered to the people, and from this moment, says Louis Blanc, his power as a feudal sovereign disappeared; he remained no longer as a monarch in France, but was simply "*chef de bourgeois.*"

It was at this time that the first exodus of the nobles took place. The startling news from Paris threw the court into a panic. The brothers of the king, the Duchess de Polignac, the bosom friend of the queen, and a host of royal favorites took a hasty departure. The swashbucklers, who had strutted around with a martial air when danger was remote, now could not get away fast enough.

All was confusion in the palace; obligations, loyalty, affection, were forgotten in the anxiety to escape. Trunks were packed, farewells hastily spoken, and departures unceremoniously taken. The crack of the whips of the postillions, as the relays started, could be heard on all sides, while clouds of dust over the highways showed the speed at which the horses traveled as the nobles hurried out of the kingdom. Instead of forming a rampart around their sovereigns, in the sunshine of whose royal favor they so long had

basked, they abandoned them at the first sign of danger to the fury of a triumphant mob. When the tempest broke, having made no preparation for safety or shelter, they had to scamper for their lives and seek refuge as exiles in foreign lands — a just retribution upon as vain, as impudent and as unpatriotic a crew as ever left a scuttled ship.

The king, to quiet the public clamor, recalled Necker, whose re-entry into the capital was an ovation.

The Revolution was enacting scenes that were but preludes to the "Reign of Terror." The mob had in its anger stricken down De Flesselles, who had sent it on a wild and fruitless errand when it was in search of arms. Delaunay, commandant of the Bastile, while under arrest and after every guarantee had been given by the leaders of the mob for his personal safety, was torn to pieces. It was his head that was one of the first to be carried as a trophy on the end of a pike through the streets of Paris; thus inaugurating that cruel, grewsome, and terrifying practice that was one of the characteristic features of the French Revolution.

The mob had tasted just enough blood to whet its appetite, and, like a wild beast, it growled for more victims.

The Palais Royal, the hot-bed of insurrection, had its list of proscribed royalists, and among them was none so hated and detested as Foulon. The mere mention of his name would instantly arouse the anger and the passions of the mob.

Foulon was seventy-four years of age and had the views and the qualities of the average nobleman or aristocrat of his day and generation; he was considered an able financier, and had been a member of the de Broglie cabinet. Before his installation he had declared, so it was said, that if he were minister he would turn the peasants out to pasture; his horses and cattle grew fat on grass and hay, and why, he asked, should the peasant not thrive on such provender? There is reason to believe that this was not true, for in the severe winter of '88 and '89 he had spent large sums of money in aid of the suffering poor; but the report had gone forth, and it required more than a mere denial to remove the impression from the public mind. It was a matter of common knowledge that as an intendant Foulon had been harsh and rapacious in his exactions and extortions, and by his severe methods had accumulated a large fortune.

After the fall of the Bastile, and especially after the hasty departure of the courtiers, he felt that his life was in danger, and he had a report of his death circulated in every direction; his attendants even arranged the details of a sham funeral and with great ceremony buried a dummy. All the while Foulon was concealed in his *château* at Viry, waiting anxiously for an opportunity to escape the country. One of his servants betrayed him, and on the 22nd of July he was seized by the peasants and compelled to go afoot to Paris, fastened to the tail-board of a cart, with a truss of hay on his back, a crown of

thistles on his head, and a chain of nettles around his neck.

When this grotesque procession entered the capital, a wild howling mob surrounded the old man, and jeered and insulted him in his humiliation and at times threatened him with instant death. He was taken from one place to another and at last lodged in the Town Hall.

Every effort was made by the authorities to convey him to prison, but the crowd had so increased in numbers and had grown so violent in its attitude that it was impossible to remove the prisoner without putting his life in jeopardy.

A demand was made by the mob for his immediate trial. Judges were chosen, and, while the proceedings were dragging their slow length along, a man well dressed and respectable in appearance, but whose name is unknown, arose and asked why time should be taken up in passing judgment upon one who had been judged for thirty years? This was the signal for action on the part of the mob, which, without waiting longer, seized Foulon who, half crazed with fear and shrieking for mercy, was hurried out of the hall, down the staircase, and into the street. La Fayette pleaded and begged for delay, but his eloquence and popularity went for naught. Appealing to that agitated and infuriated crowd was like whistling against the blast.

In front of a grocer's shop, in the neighborhood of the Place de Grève, was a stout iron lantern hung from heavy brackets fastened to the wall. From this handy gibbet, the old man

was suspended three times before the rope would hold its victim. Piteously he begged for his life, kissing the hand of one of his executioners; but the mob was inexorable and, on his knees, he was compelled to ask pardon of God and the nation for his sins. After execution the body was torn down and stripped of its clothing; the head was cut off and a handful of hay stuffed into the mouth; it was then mounted on the point of a pike and borne in triumph through the streets of the city. Now was heard for the first time the wild cry of the rabble: "To the lamp post with all the aristocrats."—"*Tous les aristocrates a la lanterne.*"

Berthier de la Sauvigny, the son-in-law of Foulon, was said to have suggested the cutting of the crops before they were ripe to feed the horses of the troops and to raise the price of grain. This put him in the same class with Foulon and marked him for destruction.

He was apprehended at Compiegne under an order of arrest which ostensibly had been issued by the Commune of Paris, but which in fact the authorities had not signed.

While the scenes incident to the seizure, trial, and execution of Foulon were taking place, Berthier was on his way to Paris. The authorities made every effort to intercept the convoy, and release the prisoner, but without success. As he entered the city he was met by the mob who threw pieces of the musty black bread of the poor into his carriage, or put loaves on the point of spears and stuck them under his nose. Fou-

lon's head on a pike was waved before him, and although he was informed that it was Delaunay's, it is said he recognized the features of his murdered relative and in his despair cried out: "I should believe such outrages as these without example if Jesus Christ had not experienced still more cruel insults. He was a God, I am but a man." When he reached the Town Hall the mob surged around him like a tempestuous sea. He was seized as he alighted from his carriage and hurried to the same lantern, where, only a few hours before, his father-in-law had been hanged like a pirate from a yardarm.

Berthier was younger, stronger, and braver than Foulon and, instead of asking for mercy and begging for quarter, he fought desperately and courageously for his life. He wrenched a gun from the hands of a bystander and defended himself most valiantly but, attacked on all sides by great numbers, he was soon overpowered and dispatched. A soldier cut out his heart and it was carried on a pike followed by a wild and frenzied mob.

In the evening it was taken into a *café* in the Palais Royal by the savages who had borne it aloft, and placed on a table beside them while they took some refreshment. All the while the crowd outside clamored for the bloody trophy, and at last it was thrown from the window into the hands of the rabble, who again formed in procession to march through the streets in triumph.

The authorities were powerless; the mob was supreme. It was the hour of retribution, the days

of dreadful reckoning had, at last, arrived, the ancient *régime* was paying a heavy penalty long overdue for its insolence, extravagance, and tyranny.

It was not the absolutism of the kings that aroused the anger and animosity of the people so much as the recollection of the long-continued and insufferable insolence of the aristocracy towards all those who were not in their class, and their contemptuous indifference to the miseries and privations of the poor. Flaunting in the face of the public their luxury, extravagance, and assumed superiority, they had created so deep a hatred in the hearts of the people that the nation at last arose in its indignation, not only to reform abuses, but also to resent an insult. Controlled by a spirit of vindictiveness, the Revolution became sanguinary, relentless, merciless; and yet it may truthfully be said that even the excesses in the "Reign of Terror" were only in part payment of an old debt and they did not exceed in enormity the cruelty and insolence of centuries. "Kind-hearted men," exclaims Michelet, "you who weep over the evils of the Revolution, shed also a few tears for the evils that occasioned it."

CHAPTER VIII

DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN — ABOLITION OF PRIVILEGES — FEAST OF THE GUARDS — MARCH OF THE WOMEN TO VERSAILLES — RETURN OF THE KING TO PARIS — THE JACOBINS — ROBESPIERRE GAINS POWER AND INFLUENCE THROUGH HIS ASSOCIATION WITH THE JACOBINS.

On July 27, 1789, the committee reported to the Assembly the basis of a Constitution. France was to remain a monarchy, no longer absolute but limited in its authority; the person of the king was to be inviolable; the crown was to be hereditary; individual liberty was to be sacred; property rights were to be conserved; no loans were to be made without the national consent; taxes were to be equalized, and to continue only from one States-General to another.

After the submission of this report to the Convention and its favorable acceptance, Mounier read the Declaration of the Rights of Man, which, among other things, announced that men are born equal in respect to their rights; that the people are sovereign, and that all power emanates from them; that no man shall be molested on account of his opinions — political or religious — provided he does not disturb the public peace; that

the citizen shall be secure in his life, liberty, reputation, and property; and that in the levying of taxes he shall be heard through his representative.

When we recall what had been the social, religious, and political conditions in France under the ancient *régime:* — that the monarch had been absolute in power; that the divine right of kings had been taught as a holy precept; that feudalism had obtained in all its rigor; that political liberty was unknown; that the citizen could be deprived of property and even life without due process of law; that taxes were unfairly and unequally distributed; that they were imposed without popular representation; and that religious intolerance was of the rankest sort,— we may then have some appreciation of the significance of this great paper. It is worthy to be classed with the Magna Charta of England, the British Petition of Rights, and the American Declaration of Independence.

On the 4th of August the liberal nobles amidst the greatest enthusiasm, at a nocturnal session of the Assembly, proposed the abolition of feudal privileges. It was a scene which Mirabeau described as an orgy, but to Robespierre it appeared as the dawning of a new era. Emotional many of its features may have been, but it was nevertheless a great stride forward in the progress of the Revolution, and if at this point there could have been a halt and the reforms which had been suggested and adopted could have been made secure, France would have been the freest state in Europe and the hopes of the most sanguine

reformers would have been more than realized. But alas! the Revolution had only started on its way; the violence was just beginning.

Because of the unsettled conditions and the many dangers that menaced the future, wealthy people were emigrating in droves; six thousand passports were issued in Paris in five days. Domestics and servants of all kinds were in consequence thrown out of employment and the great army of the needy received vast numbers of recruits every day.

While this distress prevailed, an incident occurred at Versailles that greatly aroused the indignation of the suffering people. The Body Guards tendered a banquet to the officers of the Flanders regiment, and upon request the king generously gave permission to use the royal theatre for the purposes of the dinner.

During the progress of the feast, the king, accompanied by the queen and the dauphin, entered the hall, and they, of course, were received by the soldiers with the wildest enthusiasm and acclamation. Heated with wine and aroused by the strains of ravishing music, the banqueters with oaths and drawn swords pledged their loyalty to the royal family. In the excitement of the occasion, the tricolor was trampled under foot and the white cockade of the Bourbons was worn as the badge of honor.

News of the feast reached Paris, and the Palais Royal grew wild with anger; blatant orators denounced the affair as an insult to the nation, and stirred the passion of the people, many

of whom had already been made ferocious by hunger.

On the 5th of October, an army of women marched from Paris to Versailles to demand bread of the king.[1] A horde of furies, terrible in aspect, poured through the gates of the city out into the open country and streamed to Versailles, twelve miles distant. The palace was despoiled, its halls and corridors were bespattered with mud and blood, and, to crown all, the rabble insisted upon taking the king back with them to Paris. His return to the capital was described as "The Joyous Entry" of October 6th.

The mob that destroyed the Bastile was not only the riffraff from the slums, but was also made up of lawyers, doctors, thrifty shopkeepers, and working men; but the rabble that marched to Versailles was composed of the lawless, the unemployed, and the discontented poor. Many of them were actually hungry, for bread was getting scarce in Paris and what there was of it was dear.

There seems to be no question that the march of the women to Versailles was taken advantage of by a number of conspirators as an opportunity to effect, if possible, the assassination of the king. Men in the crowd disguised as women were doubtless the paid agents of the Duke of Orleans, and why they failed to accomplish the object of their appointment is hard to tell. The queen's life was in danger, and it was saved only by the

[1] See "Mirabeau and the French Revolution," p. 314.

courage of two gallant soldiers of the Life Guards; but Louis does not seem to have been in any special peril, though a carefully and slyly aimed shot or thrust could very easily have made way with his Majesty. Perhaps the hearts of the assassins failed them.

In a letter written by the Duke of Orleans, but not made public until after his death, he directed his banker not to pay the sum that had been agreed upon as the price for the blood of the king. "The money is not earned, the marmot still lives," was the choice language used by the duke in referring to his royal cousin.

In these stirring scenes, it does not appear that Robespierre took any active part. Finding that he was not making an impression upon the Assembly, and that he was greatly overshadowed by men of brilliant talents, he turned to the clubs and attended nightly their sessions and took part in their discussions and deliberations.

The clubs acquired a great importance during the Revolution. "Agitators under the Constituent Assembly, they became," says Thiers, "dominators under the Legislative."

The society of the Jacobins was the leading organization of its kind in Paris, and, in time, had its branches in all the provinces of the kingdom, so that a man who made a reputation in the parent association was known throughout the nation.

Nobles, lawyers, authors, orators, actors, and artists were enrolled in its membership. Mira-

beau, Barnave, Duport, the Lameths, David, Vernet, Talma, Chénier, and men of the highest distinction attended its sessions.

It was organized in the early days of the Revolution, and exerted an influence from the very beginning. In May, 1789, while the deputies of the Third Estate were in attendance upon the States-General in Versailles, some of them formed an association called " The Friends of the Constitution." When in October the king was forced to go to Paris, this society moved to the capital and took up its quarters in the deserted chapel that had belonged to the convent of the Jacobins. It was from this religious order that the club took its name; just as the clubs of Danton and the Lameths were called, respectively, the Cordeliérs and the Feuillants, from the fact that they occupied the convents of those religious societies. These buildings had been abandoned, under the decree of the Assembly confiscating Church lands, the nuns and monks had been dispersed, and the property was used for secular purposes.

The Club of the Jacobins originally had about 300 members, but this number increased in time to 6,000. In 1792, there were throughout France about twelve hundred affiliated societies, almost as many as there were towns and villages in the kingdom. To be elected it was necessary to be proposed by ten members and obtain a majority of votes.

The chapel in which the meetings of the parent society were held was a great barn-like struc-

ture with a peaked roof and a row of attic windows on each side; surmounting the building was a small cupola or bell tower. There were tall gothic windows in the side walls which admitted an abundance of light. Over the entrance was a board with the words:

SOCIETÉ DES JACOBINS
UNITÉ, LIBERTÉ, EGALITÉ, INDIVISIBILITÉ
DE LA REPUBLIQUE
FRATERNITÉ OU LA MORT

Above this board hung a red flag and on the top of the staff was the *bonnet rouge*. Inside the walls were bare, having been shorn of all church ornaments; two large stoves stood in the middle of the hall with elbow pipes issuing out of the windows. Against the side walls, facing each other, were the platform for the chairman and the tribune for the orators. The members occupied rising seats that were arranged against the walls. A gallery was at one end of the building for the use of the public. The meetings were held every second day and the sessions began at eight in the evening and continued until about half past ten o'clock. In the mornings there were instruction classes at which citizens were taught their public duties.

All questions that were discussed in the Assembly were argued and considered at the meetings of the Jacobins, and so influential did the club become that in time it not only directed, but, in a great measure, dictated legislation. It was the revolutionary centre of France and vital-

ized the forces of insurrection throughout the kingdom. "There are places," said Chateaubriand, "which seem to be the laboratories of sedition."

Here was a field in which Robespierre soon exerted a powerful influence. As a man of education, as a lawyer by profession, and as a delegate to the National Assembly, he secured a hearing here which he could not at first obtain in the Convention.

Robespierre possessed unquestionably some attractive qualities. He had always an air of earnestness and sincerity; if he was not sincere then he must have been a consummate actor. His speech and conduct had always so much the appearance of singleness of purpose, that his honesty was considered beyond question.

He had the faculty of looking wise, and his serious manner tended to give the impression to an average audience that he was a thoughtful man, so that when he spoke he was listened to attentively. His classical and historical allusions, his constant references to the philosophers, his patriotic platitudes and protestations of integrity and loyalty that would have evoked the jeers of his colleagues in the Assembly, where the debates were to the point, short, sharp, and decisive, secured for him at the club the reputation of being a learned, an honest, and a loyal man, and the crowd regarded him with respect.

"The Convention would have yawned," says Morley, "if it had not trembled under him, but the Jacobin Club never found him tedious. It

is said that for eighteen months there was not a single night he did not make to the Jacobins at least one speech, and that never a short one."

It was in the club that he first won the support of the radicals, and it was through the club that he gained his ascendency over the mob. It is hard to say, or even to imagine, what his career would have been without the advantages he derived from this association.

There is no question about his popularity, and yet, strange to say, he did not possess what are called the arts of the practical politician. Repelling all familiarity, he was anything but cordial and magnetic in manner; he had not the cheery word, the contagious laugh, and the genial shake of the hand, which count so much in the game of politics.

He doubtless appeared occasionally in the gardens of the Palais Royal, the focus of the Revolution, where were forged its thunderbolts, but there is no record of his ever having addressed the crowd. In this early period of his career he was not sufficiently experienced to speak in so tumultuous an assemblage and yet what a school for the training of an orator! When Wendell Phillips was asked by a young man what he should do to acquire the art of public speaking, the answer was, "Take a course of mobs."

CHAPTER IX

FRANCE DIVIDED INTO DEPARTMENTS — PARIS — MURDER OF FRANÇOIS — THE THEATRES — CONFISCATION OF CHURCH PROPERTY — ASSIGNATS.

From time out of mind, France had been divided into hostile provinces of unequal extent, and the inhabitants of one district were strangers to those of another. They differed in customs, habits, manners, laws, and even language, and had all the prejudices that usually characterize the citizens of contiguous foreign states. To cross the lines that separated the districts and the bridges that spanned the rivers, required the payment of toll, while local custom-houses collected tariff duties upon goods transported from one province to another. To do away with this system that tended to denationalize France, the Assembly divided the country into eighty-three separate departments, with equal rights and under one law.

Paris, of course, was the centre of the country. Not only was it the capital of France, but it was the largest and the most important city on the continent of Europe. It had a population of about 600,000; and was then, as it is today, devoted to gayety and fashion.

The Paris of 1789, however, was not the beautiful city it is in our times. The streets were mostly narrow and very dirty. There was no underground drainage, and when it rained the gutters became the channels for rushing torrents, over which fops and well-dressed ladies were carried by stout porters who charged a few sous for their services. There were no sidewalks on many of the streets, and it required care, skill, and experience for a pedestrian to pick his way with safety, for the drivers of the many vehicles were utterly regardless of the rights of foot-travelers. Heavy, lumbering, gilded coaches of the aristocrats, as big as small houses, drawn by four or six horses, cabriolets driven rapidly and recklessly by young men of fashion, fiacres, carts, and sedan chairs — the last as a method of conveyance had not yet gone entirely out of fashion — formed an endless procession, an inextricable maze, and kept winding in and out, governed by no rule or law of locomotion or right of way and defiant of all police and municipal regulations.

In fair weather the streets were covered with a fine dust and in wet weather were transformed into ditches of mud. Beggars were on every hand; hawkers, both men and women, shrieked their wares in a discordant medley, while cut-purses on all sides watched for an opportunity to take advantage of the unwary. Soldiers, strangers, porters, gaily-dressed women mingled in the throng. It was a most animated scene, full of interest and color.

Bad as was the condition of the streets in daytime, it was worse at night; the lamps or lanterns were of a primitive pattern, set far apart, and on many highways when there was a moon they were not lighted. During the winter and in stormy weather, except in the most prominent localities or in the neighborhood of the *cafés* and the public gardens, the streets were dismal, gloomy, and dangerous and the solitary pedestrian was likely to fall into a ditch or into the hands of a highwayman.

Many of the comforts and the conveniences of modern domestic life, which add so much to happiness, cleanliness, and health, were unknown at this period. Even the palaces of the great in the winter season were cold and cheerless; many of the apartments were without light and air; wide fireplaces blazed with logs, but most of the heat went up the chimneys, and in damp weather the rooms were often filled with smoke. At a feast given at Versailles during the reign of Louis XIV, it was impossible to heat the large banquet hall, and in consequence the wine and the water froze in the goblets, while the courtiers shivered and their teeth chattered as they exchanged *bon mots*. Sanitary regulations, even in the most sumptuous palaces, were neglected, and the odors at times were most offensive. If this was the case in the houses of the rich, one can imagine what must have been the discomfort in the homes of the poor. The pomp and magnificence of royalty submitted to conditions that to-day would

be deemed intolerable in the humblest habitations.

The conditions that prevailed in France, however, were the same the world over. Paris did not in these particulars differ from other leading continental cities. The great inventions and improvements of the nineteenth century, that have done so much for the betterment of mankind in everyday life, had not yet been introduced.

Paris, as the capital of France, was the centre of the Revolution, and as every road led in her direction it was easy to find the way. Tramps, beggars, outcasts, all poured through the open gates, found refuge in the slums, and added not only to the agitation but to the common distress. Like vultures, drawn by the smell of carrion, they came in from every quarter. "All this mass floats about the city," says Thiers, "and is engulfed therein as in a great sewer — the honest poor and the criminal alike; some beg, all prowl about, a prey to hunger and the rumor of the streets."

These crowds of vagrants had for generations been wandering along the highways of France, much to the annoyance of travelers and country folk. Vauban at the close of the seventeenth century, in commenting on this matter, said: "The highroads and the streets of towns and boroughs are full of mendicants, whom hunger and nakedness have driven from their homes."

In 1789, this army of tramps, according to an estimate made by Louis Blanc, numbered 2,000,-

000 in a total population of 25,000,000 of people, a most dangerous percentage. These hordes were made desperate because of the scarcity of food, and many of the cities, following in the footsteps of Rome, were compelled to amuse and feed them at the public expense.

Of course, a great multitude of these vagrants came to the capital where bread was already scarce, and their presence did not in any way increase the supply of food. Soon Paris surpassed all other cities with the possible exception of ancient Rome, in the disproportionate number of its wretched and unemployed poor. Howling mobs paraded through the streets, terrorizing the citizens, defying the authorities, and creating trouble in every direction.

The Revolution had already accomplished much in the way of reform, really more than it accomplished in all its future existence; but it was now taking a new turn, and force and terror were usurping the functions of legislation. "Paris, if given up to itself," said Mirabeau, "will in three months probably be a hospital and certainly a theatre of horrors."

Robespierre, however, viewing the situation from a different standpoint, saw in the prevailing conditions the means to effect the social and political revolution that France so greatly needed. The mobs were but the vanguard of that army that was to overthrow and destroy the monarchy.

To relieve the distress, the authorities doled out food to the needy. Necker furnished funds

from the public treasury for the purchase of grain, while Bailly, the good, kind-hearted mayor, spent large sums of money out of his own fortune to appease the hunger of the poor.

François, the baker, it was rumored, had, in violation of law, cornered a quantity of flour. On October 21, 1789, the crowd gathered before his shop and threatened him with violence. It was stated that the story was without any foundation, but no argument can convince the minds of hungry men, for starvation knows no logic. The shop was sacked and, although there were found only a few loaves of bread, the poor baker's body was torn to pieces and his head carried aloft on a pike, followed by a rabble as wild as dancing dervishes. The authorities soon scattered the mob and restored order.

To provide against the recurrence of such disorder and violence, the Assembly enacted a new martial law. Robespierre vehemently opposed its passage on the ground that it evinced a distrust of the people. The stand he took upon this question and the clear enunciation of his democratic principles won for him the wild applause of the galleries.

The Assembly had moved to Paris after the king took up his abode in the palace of the Tuileries and continued its labors on the Constitution.

Royalty having come to the capital, society in a short time, after recovering from its fright caused by the riots, became as gay as ever.

The theatres, always favorite places of amusement with the Parisians, were, says Imbert de

Saint-Amand, the tilting grounds for the factions and parties. The actors, themselves, were partisans, and frequently they would twist their lines so as to apply the sentiments expressed in the plays to current matters and thus call forth the cheers of the pit or the jeers of the boxes, as the case might be. If the royalists were present in force, they would insist upon the orchestra's playing their favorite airs: "*Charmante Gabrielle,*" "*Vive Henri Quatre!*" and "*O, Richard! O, mon roi!*" while the revolutionists would attempt to drown the music by vociferously singing the wild strains of the "*Ça ira.*" Sometimes the performance would be interrupted by a hand-to-hand fight, swords would be drawn, heads cracked and blood shed, and after the play, knightly escorts and elegantly dressed ladies would be howled at by the mob and occasionally rolled into the kennels.

Even while the Germans were at the gates of Paris, the people, says Victor Hugo, went to the play as they did at Athens during the Peloponnesian War.

Although many of the nobles had fled, there were enough left behind to make the levees interesting and even brilliant. Madame de Staël says than during this time Paris was never gayer. Society kept open house, and, while the slums were seething with discontent and the hungry and homeless were wandering through the streets, the mansions of the rich nightly blazed with light and splendor. Poverty, shivering and starving in the shadow of the palace, induced to riot and

revolution. It was the luxury and extravagance of the aristocracy of the old *régime* and the insolent, ostentatious display of their wealth that created envy and hatred in the hearts of the common people; but the lessons of the past were unheeded by the rich and their conduct at this time only increased the general discontent.

The rapacity of the Church had resulted in the accumulation of vast wealth, which, when the Revolution occurred, was estimated at 2,000,000,000 francs, yielding a revenue of about 75,000,000 francs annually. This was looked upon with an envious eye by the State and, at last, it was decided to appropriate it bodily. The confiscation of the Church lands and the issuance of assignats which were secured by these lands, postponed the threatened bankruptcy and temporarily relieved the financial situation. Vast issues of paper money, of course, induced to speculation and extravagance, drove the precious metals out of circulation, and ultimately resulted in repudiation; but, for the time being, these issues increased the volume of currency, gave an impetus to business, and provided employment for the poor.

This confiscation of the ecclesiastical property was considered by the Church an act of ruthless spoliation, and at once that mighty organization became the avowed and sworn enemy of the Revolution.

The men who were chiefly responsible for this act of appropriation by the State were Talleyrand and Mirabeau. The former, a churchman of

prominence, was solemnly excommunicated by a papal decree. The fulminations from the Vatican, however, were no longer heeded in France and, in sheer defiance of the threats from Rome, the Assembly proclaimed religious toleration and even went so far as to elect for its president Rabaut Saint Etienne, the son of a Protestant clergyman.

Robespierre at this time had not reached the prominence in the Assembly he subsequently attained, but he boldly stood forth and expressed his views in favor of the confiscation of Church property.

CHAPTER X

THE KING VISITS THE ASSEMBLY — MARQUIS DE FAVRES — COUNT D'INISDAL — REORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH — FESTIVAL OF THE FEDERATION — AFFAIR OF NANCY.

While the Assembly was busily employed in constructing the Constitution, its labors were interrupted on February 4, 1790, by a visit from the king, who, to encourage the deputies, declared that it was his desire and his intention to give his allegiance to that instrument, which was yet unfinished. The hall rang with cheers and many of the members wept in the joy of their emotions. Strange that the king was so anxious to evince a spirit of loyalty to that Constitution which he subsequently, upon its adoption, refused to obey and endeavored to destroy. It is said that he made this visit and declaration at the instance of Necker and the queen.

The Marquis de Favras, a restless and reckless spirit, was arrested for conspiracy, charged with being implicated in a plot to kill La Fayette, Necker, and Bailly, to abduct the king, and to place his brother Provence on the throne. On the 18th of February, the marquis was convicted and sentenced to death. If he had any co-conspirators he was brave and loyal enough to con-

ceal their identity and he went to execution with his lips sealed; if there was a secret, it died with him. It was believed, at the time, that the conspiracy was far-reaching, that many men of prominence and distinction were concerned in it, and that they breathed easier after the marquis lost his head.

De Favras is said to have been the first noble ever executed in France by hanging, and he was about the last person to be formally sentenced to suffer death by that method of punishment, for shortly afterwards, the guillotine, that bloody machine that became the very sign and symbol of the Revolution, was introduced and adopted by the government.

The Revolution was running on at a terrific pace; its violence and its hostility to the king were increasing daily and it was a growing belief in every quarter that the life of Louis was in peril. Marie Antoinette told Madame Campan that their only safety was in flight, that no one could tell to what length the factions would go, and that the dangers increased every moment.

There were many efforts made, at this time, to save the king by carrying him out of the country, and it is reasonable to suppose that some of these royalistic plots could have succeeded, had Louis given the conspirators any encouragement or personal assistance; but he seemed afraid to act.

In March, 1790, Count d'Inisdal was selected by a number of nobles to make arrangements for the escape of Louis. He won over D'Aumont, Captain of the Guard at the Tuileries, and

everything was in readiness to carry off his Majesty at midnight; but the king, with his usual irresolution, would not give his assent to any proposition. He was very willing to be stolen from his palace in the dead of night, or at any other time, but he did not want to appear to be a consenting party to the abduction; he was anxious to save his life, but feared the loss of his crown, and he believed that a willingness upon his part to be abducted would be considered an abdication.

Count D'Inisdal submitted the plan of escape to Madame Campan, who straightway consulted with her father-in-law in relation to the matter. He at once sought the king, whom he found playing a game of whist with Marie Antoinette, his brother Provence, and his sister-in-law. When Campan had explained the details of the contemplated abduction, the king made no reply. The queen at last impatiently exclaimed: "Sire! have you nothing to say to Campan?" Then followed another long silence when Louis, again prodded by the queen, said: "Tell D'Inisdal I cannot consent to be carried off." "Remember," added Marie Antoinette, addressing Campan, "that you convey the right message; the king says he cannot *consent* to be carried off."

When the answer was given to D'Inisdal he was much dissatisfied; he did not think it fair that he should bear the entire responsibility of the enterprise, for it was not the safest thing in the world to kidnap a king.

Marie Antoinette, still hoping that the plans

had not miscarried, made every preparation for flight; but, when the steeples rang the hour of midnight and the conspirators did not appear, she abandoned herself to disappointment and retired with a heavy heart.

The Church already had been despoiled of its property and now the Assembly was determined to bring that great organization into harmony with the new order of things. For this purpose a bill was introduced providing for the civil constitution of the clergy. The Church was to be stripped of its dignities and influence and made obedient and subservient to the State. Monastic vows and religious orders were to be abolished and each congregation was to elect its own pastor, who was to be paid his salary out of the national treasury. All prelates and priests were to take an oath of allegiance to the Constitution and swear to observe the laws.

Robespierre strongly supported this movement. The bill was reported from the committee on the 29th of May, 1790, and on the following day Robespierre addressed the Chamber on the question of its adoption. He contended that the priests should be only magistrates appointed to take charge of public worship; he favored the abolition of the titles and offices of cardinals and archbishops, a great reduction in the number of priests and the vesting of power in the State to name the bishops and *curés*. In other words, he would have made the Church but a department of the government, a kind of bureau of morals.

The expression of his views, and he pressed

them with his usual persistency, aroused the greatest opposition among the moderates and although he was supported by a majority of the members of the Assembly, the house was thrown into such confusion that it was impossible for him to proceed. The bill as originally reported from the committee was, however, in the main enacted into a law. On June 14th, it was decreed that the priests before consecration should take in public an oath of allegiance to the nation, but it was not until August 24th, that the king confirmed the decree that established the civil constitution of the clergy.

The attitude of the Assembly towards the Church aroused the indignation and fury of the clericals and engendered such bitterness as resulted at last in the dreadful massacres in Avignon, La Vendée, and Brittany during the reign of the "White Terror" when religious zeal was aroused to strangle the frenzy of the Revolution.

Meanwhile plans were going forward for a great festival, to be celebrated in Paris, in commemoration of the destruction of the Bastile. The Festival of the Federation was held on the Field of Mars on the 14th of July, 1790. Paris was crowded with visitors, for all France welcomed the coming of this historic and auspicious day. The deputies of the departments were presented to the king, who received them with the greatest cordiality, and they in turn gave to him every expression and testimony of their love and loyalty. The leader of the Breton deputation, kneeling before the king and presenting his sword, said:

"Sire, I place in your hands the faithful sword of the brave Bretons; it shall be reddened only by the blood of your foes." The king raised the kneeling deputy and embraced him, then returning the sword said: "It cannot be in better hands than in those of my brave Bretons. I have never doubted their loyalty and affection; assure them that I am the father, the brother, and the friend of all Frenchmen."

On the day of the celebration the rain fell in torrents, but nothing could dampen the ardor and enthusiasm of the occasion. Twelve hundred trained singers chanted the Te Deum and half a million voices sang the rapturous strains of the "*Ça ira.*" Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun, to whose cold and cynical nature such ceremonies seemed ridiculous, blessed the banners. La Fayette, representing the army, bared his sword, placed it on the altar of the country, and took an oath to serve faithfully the nation; in response 100,000 National Guards echoed and re-echoed his words. The president of the Assembly and the deputies exclaimed, as if in one voice: "We swear it." The king solemnly lodged his oath in heaven to obey the mandates of the Constitution, and the queen, carried away by her emotions, held up the dauphin in the face of the multitude and together mother and son, amidst the wildest demonstrations of joy, consecrated themselves unto France. The rain ceased, the sun came out in all his glory, and heaven seemed to send down its benediction.

At night the city was illuminated and a ball took place on the very spot where a year before the Bastile had stood. "They danced with joy and security on the ground that had been watered with tears, where courage, genius, and innocence had groaned, and where the cries of despair had been uttered in death."

The Festival, alas! was but a halt in the march of the Revolution; its aspirations for universal peace and the brotherhood of man were but hopes as evanescent as dreams. Emotional as it was, it must, however, be taken as the heartfelt expression of the real purpose of the Revolution. To Robespierre and the men of his class who longed for ideals, it was an event that marked the world's advance — a step towards that utopian existence that was the dream of Rousseau.

Many of the features of the ceremony, when viewed coldly, were silly and purely sensational and, of course, were subjected to the ridicule and the sarcasm of witty journalists, many of whom went far beyond the limits of propriety.

Camille Desmoulins, whose pen was as sharp as the sting of an adder, gave full play to his fancy and revolutionary sentiments. He alluded to the king as the Elder Capet and declared that the throne occupied by him on the Field of Mars should have been empty if it was the real purpose to represent the sovereignty of the nation. He called the ancient triumph of Æmilius Paulus a national festival because a king with his hands tied behind his back followed in humiliation the

triumphal car of the Roman conqueror, and intimated that it would be in place to chain Louis to the chariot wheels of the republic.

This was getting very close to what might be classed as treasonable declarations, but Marat went even further than Camille. He fumed and railed and derided those who had charge of the *fête* for having provided a throne for the king at the foot of which he received the homage of a subservient people, while in the shadow of this throne the president of the Assembly, the real representative of the sovereignty of the nation, occupied a mean and humble seat. This glaring contrast, he said, was an insult to a free and an enfranchised people.

Such language, had it been uttered in the days of the old *régime,* would have been smothered in the dark recesses of a dungeon; a *lettre de cachet,* without the tedious forms of a trial, would summarily have put an end to utterances so treasonable; but the Revolution had changed these conditions.

An effort was made in the Assembly to decree the prosecution of these arch disturbers of the public peace; but, although a law was passed authorizing the prosecution, it was nullified by the passage of a subsequent act that provided there should be no prosecution for anything published prior to the date of this last enactment.

This was temporizing with treason and was simply an inducement to the repetition of the offence.

The influence of the Festival was rapidly wan-

ing; soon the whole State was again rocking in the throes of revolution, the provinces were in revolt, the *Jacquerie* were at work, and the midnight skies reflected the flames of the many wrecked and burning *chateaux*.

In every branch of the army there had developed a spirit of insubordination. The radical clubs had established a propaganda that was covertly circulating the literature of the Revolution in every camp and thus instilling into the minds of the soldiers the principles of the new order.

The Revolution had opened to the common soldiers the avenues of promotion; merit, instead of birth and influence, was the way to advancement. The superior officers heretofore had all been royalists. Many of them had resigned their commands, and those who remained, even though they took the civic oath, were mistrusted and disliked by the troops. Moreover, increasing the discontent, the patrician officers looked with contempt upon the plebeian upstarts who had secured promotion.

To gain favor with the troops, the Assembly had increased their pay. It was now a desperate struggle between the Convention and the supporters of the monarchy to secure the confidence of the army.

An unfortunate incident which occurred at this time resulted in retarding momentarily the progress of the Revolution and created a strong reaction in favor of law and order.

A regiment of Swiss soldiers stationed at

Nancy demanded from their officers the payment of money which they claimed was in arrears. Their demands not being complied with, they exhibited signs of sedition. A hot-headed, reckless officer named Malseigne was sent by the Assembly to negotiate a settlement in the matter, but he acted in so arbitrary a manner that he exasperated the soldiers and they threw him into the guardhouse. Here was mutiny in its most flagrant form.

General Bouillé, a cousin of La Fayette and an uncompromising royalist, was a martinet of the most pronounced type and a soldier of the old school; he was about the last man in the army to brook, for a moment, insubordination in the ranks. To him was assigned the duty of bringing the insurgents to subjection and he set about his task with coolness and military precision. He marched with superior forces against the Swiss, and when the conflict was over the few remaining mutineers were hanged, broken on the wheel, or sent to the galleys.

The royalists were elated over the result; they looked upon it as the first step towards crushing out the Revolution by force. Bouillé, on motion of Mirabeau, was honored by the Assembly with a vote of thanks.

Robespierre at the Jacobins' was outspoken in his denunciation of the affair, while Marat shrieked in despair and called upon the revolutionists to avenge the murder of innocent men. The mob gathered and paraded through the

streets and after shouting: "Hang the ministers," dispersed without committing any act of violence. It did seem as if at last the supremacy of the law was to prevail.

CHAPTER XI

RESIGNATION OF NECKER — NECKER — THE NATIONAL GUARD — THE KING'S AUNTS — THE AFFAIR OF VINCENNES — THE DAY OF THE DAGGERS — THÉROIGNE DE MERICOURT — MIRABEAU — STORY OF THE ALLEGED CONSPIRACY TO POISON MIRABEAU.

Necker, whose popularity for some while back had been on the wane, sent in his resignation in the early part of September, 1790, and quietly took his departure for Geneva, from which town he could safely watch the progress of the Revolution and thank his good fortune that he had left before he was caught in its swirl.

Jacques Necker, one of the most prominent figures in the early period of the Revolution, was born of Protestant parents in Geneva in 1732. He came to Paris when quite a young man and obtained a clerkship in the well-known banking house of the Thellusons, and in time was made a member of the firm. He was very successful in several speculations and retired from business after accumulating a large fortune.

Ambitious to become prominent in public affairs, he wrote a eulogy on the great Colbert and won the prize of the *Académie Française*. The work attracted considerable attention and

gained for him quite a reputation in the literary and political world. He subsequently, in 1775, published his "*Essai sur la legislation et le commerce des grains*"—"Essay regarding legislation and the export of grain," in which he attacked the free trade policy of Turgot.

Necker's wife, whose maiden name was Suzanne Curchod, was a Swiss by birth, the daughter of a Protestant clergyman. She had been carefully educated and had conducted successfully a school in Geneva. In her early years while in Lausanne, she was wooed by Edward Gibbon, the great historian, and almost became his bride.

She was altogether a very remarkable woman and although not beautiful she was at all times very interesting and a most brilliant conversationalist. Her husband's great fortune enabled her to entertain extensively and her *salon* became one of the most famous in Paris. Her receptions were attended by the brightest wits and the most prominent men in the world of letters, art, and politics. In fact, her Fridays rivaled the Mondays of Madame Geoffrin and the Tuesdays of Madame Helvetius. She was a woman of ready wit, was devotedly attached to her husband, had supreme confidence in his ability, and left no stone unturned to promote his political fortunes. She was greatly assisted in her entertainments by her daughter, the celebrated Madame de Staël.

M. Necker was not so well fitted as his wife to shine in society, but he looked wise, was pompous in manner, and had the reputation of being the

ablest financier in France. It may be said in this connection that he himself had no doubt in his own mind that his ability was even greater than his reputation.

He was rather striking in appearance: his face was strong but amiable in expression; his eyes were sharp and piercing and overhung by heavy shaggy eyebrows. As he advanced in years his figure grew bulky and corpulent, so that he was not graceful in carriage and he ever lacked that innate air of ease and refinement that was noticeable among most of his associates. Unfortunately he thought himself possessed of great wit, and in his efforts to become agreeable he often became tiresome. His voice was not pleasant in its tones and he was without any of the attributes of the orator.

As a banker and first-class business man, his powers were remarkable, but he was without the qualifications for a politician or a statesman. He did not know how to judge character, to manage men, or to control events. His overweening vanity and conceit induced him to believe that he was equal to any emergency; he thought he could save France alone, refusing to act with La Fayette or Mirabeau or to form an alliance with any of the prominent men of that day.

Robespierre, when he first came to Paris as a deputy, was greatly impressed with the importance and reputation of Necker, for at that period all France was ringing with his fame; but, as time ran on Robespierre's admiration waned and he became one of the minister's most caustic

critics. Necker, in time, looked with contempt upon Robespierre, whom he considered a man of phrases and one who wasted public time in the wordy discussion of questions upon which he was not well informed. Between these two men it would have been impossible to form a lasting personal or confidential union. Both were vain and self-sufficient, but in every other respect they were totally unlike. In fact, among all the leaders in the French Revolution none resembled Robespierre. He was unique, he stood alone. Mirabeau and Danton, for instance, bore in some respects a close resemblance to each other, indeed likenesses may be drawn between many men of that period; but this is not the case with Robespierre. He had no counterpart, and among all his contemporaries there was none more unlike him in character and temperament than Necker.

Necker brought to the management of the finances of a great government the same methods that he would have applied to the affairs of a private banking house. The real trouble with him was that his vision never got beyond the folios of the national ledger. France needed a statesman; he was only a financier.

When he was first appointed minister of finance, following in the footsteps of Turgot — the ablest political economist of that day — he at once inaugurated great reforms. He reduced expenditures, abolished useless offices, pensions, and privileges, equalized taxation, and attempted to curb and restrain the iniquitous exactions of the farmers-general. He was sincere, honest,

and patriotic, serving in his office without pay, and often drawing on his own fortune to relieve the exigencies of the State and to alleviate the sufferings of the poor; so it was natural that he should be regarded with favor by the lower and middle classes. His reforms, however, brought down upon his head the denunciation of the nobility and the privileged classes and he was designated an adventurer and a charlatan.

He opposed the recognition of the independence of the American Colonies, not because he did not at heart sympathize with them in their struggle for freedom, but because he saw as a financier that embarking upon a war with England would cause a drain upon the treasury of France that it could not stand, and therein unquestionably he was right.

In 1781, he published his celebrated "Account Rendered" and thus revealed to the world the financial condition of the government and the way the money of the people had been wasted and squandered.

Expressing about this time a desire to enter the cabinet of the king, from which by law he was excluded because of his religion, he was told that if he abjured his creed, his request might be favorably considered. At once he sent in his resignation as Minister of Finance, believing, however, that it would be refused, but to his amazement and mortification it was accepted, and he was compelled to go into retirement.

In September, 1788, however, he was recalled

by the king to take charge of the disordered finances.

It was Necker who urged the calling of the States-General. But he saw nothing alarming except the threatened deficit; and his speech at the opening session of that great congress proved that he had no true conception of the real dangers that menaced the nation. He looked upon the Assembly merely as a medium to grant money, not to originate and organize reforms.

He had been influential in securing the double representation of the Third Estate; but, when it came to a question of the reunion of the three orders, he hesitated to act promptly and decisively, and allowed the king to be forced by the Assembly instead of taking the initiative and ordering the three estates to meet in common. This was the first great turning point in the Revolution, and if Necker had been a statesman of broad and constructive intellect, of foresight, courage, and resolution, he would have insisted upon bringing the three orders together and might have saved the monarchy by placing it upon constitutional foundations; for at this period even the most radical revolutionist did not desire its complete destruction.

On the 11th of July, 1789, Necker was summarily dismissed from office; but the uprising of the people and the fall of the Bastile induced the king to recall him at once, and his return, as we have already seen, was a veritable triumph. But at this time France needed a statesman of

commanding ability and power, not a banker, a mere negotiator of loans; and this man, who upon his return in July, 1789, had been welcomed with every demonstration of joy, soon had fallen so low in the estimation of the people that his departure, in September, 1790, did not excite the slightest public interest. He was fortunate, however, in being able to quit the kingdom without interference, for had he remained it would have been at his life's risk.

The National Guard, which played so conspicuous and important a part in the Revolution, was organized as a militia or constabulary force. It consisted of citizens over a certain age, who were to respond at a moment's call to defend the capital or to preserve public order. A clearer designation of the body, perhaps, would be to call it a Home Guard. General La Fayette was its commander.

In November, 1790, Rabaut Saint Etienne made a motion in the Assembly that the National Guard should be composed only of taxpayers. The purpose of this proposition was to exclude from the ranks of the organization the rabble, or what were termed insubstantial citizens.

Mirabeau favored the motion, but Robespierre vehemently opposed it on the ground that it was making a distinction which was undemocratic in principle and that it appeared to gauge a man's patriotism by the amount of taxes he paid. In the evening, at a meeting of the Jacobins, the matter was again taken up for consideration and Robespierre made a strong speech in opposition

to the proposition. While in the midst of his argument, Mirabeau, who as president of the society was presiding, called him to order, hoping in this way to cut off further discussion of the question; but the meeting was at once thrown into confusion, and the friends of Robespierre rallied to his support and urged him to go on. Mirabeau rang the bell, vainly endeavoring to restore order, then called upon his friends to surround him. Only a few, however, responded, and Robespierre, whose influence and importance had so rapidly grown in the Jacobins', scored a decisive victory.

In February, 1791, an incident occurred which, though trivial in itself, threw all Paris into a tumult. Louis had two aunts living at Bellevue, near Paris, who thought it about time to leave France and find a sanctuary in Rome. They were two elderly maiden ladies named Adelaide and Victoire, daughters of Louis XV, and of so little importance politically that they had long since passed out of the public eye. After all their arrangements were made to quit the kingdom, they found, much to their dismay, that the authorities would not honor their request for passports. The air for some time past had been filled with rumors that it was the intention of the king to go to Metz, and the flight of the princesses was declared to be but the prelude to the escape of the royal family.

Blatant orators harangued the people and predicted all kinds of disaster if these two old ladies were permitted to depart. A mob of fishwomen

soon gathered and threatened to march forthwith to Bellevue. The king sent word at once to his aunts to come to Paris, and, disguised as servants, they eluded the mob and reached the Tuileries in safety. Here they continued their preparations and at the first opportunity fled.

Mirabeau had advised Louis to prevent the departure of his aunts, but Louis as usual refused to take advice.

When it was ascertained that the princesses had gone, a great mob of people to the number of 50,000, gathered around the Tuileries and threatened its destruction, so that it required a show of military force to keep the crowd at bay. Cannon were planted in commanding positions and the National Guards under La Fayette were drawn up in line of battle.

Out of the slums and from the gardens of the Palais Royal came a horde of harpies led by that beautiful amazon, Théroigne de Mericourt, the notorious leader of the demimonde. Paris was wild with excitement, wrought up to a fury by the appeals of the demagogues who demanded the arrest of the fugitives that they might be held as hostages for the good behavior of the emigrants. Shops were closed, business was suspended throughout the city, and the streets were thronged with excited people. And all this was the result of the departure from Paris of two inoffensive old ladies.

Even the Assembly sat in solemn conclave and brushed aside all other business to deliberate gravely upon this important matter. Robes-

pierre declared that the king, if he were acting in good faith, owed it to the nation to compel the return of the fugitives. Mirabeau asked in a sarcastic vein: "Is there any law against traveling?" "Yes; the safety of the people," was the answer. "Obedience to the law is the safety of the people," retorted Mirabeau. At last, after much discussion, Menou showed the ridiculous side of the case by saying: "Europe will be amazed to learn that this great Assembly attaches such importance to the question as to whether two old ladies shall hear mass in Paris or in Rome."

While all these events were transpiring in the capital, the princesses were hastening on their way. Twice they were stopped, once at Moret and afterwards at Arny-le-duc, but at last they crossed the frontier in safety and passed out of history.

The flight of the king's aunts induced the people to believe that Louis, if he could, would soon follow.

It was not strange that the public suspected his intentions, for any reasonable man could see that there was only one thing under the circumstances for the king to do. He was virtually a prisoner; deprived of his liberty, shorn of all power, there was nothing left for him to save but his life, and he could save that only by escaping from his enemies.

At the sessions of the Assembly and in the meetings of the Jacobins, Robespierre frequently gave warning that it was the intention of the

king to quit Paris at the first favorable opportunity, and insisted that every precaution should be taken to prevent so great a catastrophe; for, up to this point, although a democrat in principle, he believed that the Revolution could accomplish no more than a reformation of the monarchy.

Several incidents occurred about this time that increased the public agitation and further imperiled the safety of the king.

The old fortress of Vincennes, situated a short distance from Paris, was undergoing some repairs and the rumor was started that the royalists were converting it into a veritable Bastile and putting it in condition to withstand a siege. It was also rumored that a subterranean passage had been constructed leading from the Tuileries to the fortress and that the royal family would, by means of this exit, escape from the capital. These startling reports, it is believed, were put into circulation by the adherents and supporters of the Duke of Orleans.

A large mob gathered in the faubourg Saint Antoine and, after being addressed by Théroigne de Mericourt, marched out under the leadership of Santerre towards Vincennes; but it was overtaken by La Fayette at the head of the National Guard and, after some persuasion, was turned back from its purpose.

During the absence of La Fayette from the city, a number of nobles who still remained in Paris, believing the king was in danger, flocked to the Tuileries and offered their services to his

THÉROIGNE DE MERICOURT

From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.
After a painting by Raffet

Majesty. It was discovered by the soldiers on guard at the palace that weapons were concealed under the cloaks of the noblemen, and it was this fact that gave the episode the designation, "Day of the Daggers."

The presence of the nobles and the report that they were armed greatly alarmed and exasperated the people, and they were wrought up to fury by the wild appeals of Théroigne de Mericourt, who, as usual, appeared upon the scene of tumult.

La Fayette, upon his return, indignant and angry at the imprudent conduct of the king's friends, deprived them of their arms and ordered them unceremoniously out of the palace, much to their chagrin and mortification; and this summary and decisive action upon the part of the general at once quieted the public clamor.

Théroigne (or Lambertine) de Mericourt, who thus played a not inconspicuous part in the stirring scenes of the Revolution, was a celebrated courtezan. She was known among the people as "*La Belle Liégoise*" and is said to have been born at Mericourt near Liége in Belgium. Her father was a respectable, well-to-do farmer, who was able to provide for her the advantages of an early education. She was of uncommon beauty and the story is told that a young *seigneur* in the neighborhood of her home wrought her ruin. It is said that she could have saved the life of her betrayer during the September massacres, but took her revenge by allowing him to perish.

Seduced and deserted, feeling keenly her shame, she left her father's house and sought

refuge in England; but after a few months' residence in that country she came to Paris and, seeming to have lost all feeling of shame, plunged into the gay life of that city. In time her *salon* became one of the most notorious and brilliant of its class. Robespierre is said to have occasionally attended her receptions.

When the Revolution arrived she plunged into its vortex with all the enthusiasm and bitterness of her nature. She was present at the attack upon the Bastile, and on the 5th of October, side by side with the ferocious Jourdan, called the man with the long beard, she led the women to Versailles. Here she assisted in corrupting the soldiers of the Flanders regiment by taking young girls into their ranks to influence them and by the lavish distribution of money. So persuasive was she that she succeeded in winning the troops to the popular cause; in fact, Madame Campan, in her Memoirs, states that one of the soldiers who in his enthusiastic loyalty had tried at the Feast to climb into the balcony box of the king to pay his homage, was, on the morning of the 6th of October, at the head of the column leading the attack upon the palace.

Théroigne was present at every uprising of the people and led the rabble, often with pike in hand, and urged them to desperate deeds. In all these scenes of tumult she wore a picturesque costume — a riding habit of red silk and a large hat with long plumes — and carried a stout sabre and two pistols in her belt. This Joan of Arc of the *Sans Culottes* was a terror to the royalists.

She often harangued the stormy meetings of the clubs, and, although she spoke with a foreign accent, her eloquence was effective and was described by Camille Desmoulins as that of a Judith.

Upon a certain occasion she made a visit to the Cordeliers, and, ascending the tribune, demanded that the Republic should build a temple to liberty on the very spot where had stood the Bastile. She declared that personal contributions should be made for this purpose, that the women should donate their jewels and ornaments, and, suiting the action to the word, she stripped her own from her neck and arms and amidst the greatest applause piled them on the tribune, offering them as a gift to the nation. "Thus lavishing on liberty," says Lamartine, "the wealth she had derived from vice."

She was sent to Liége to induce the people to rise, but was captured by the Austrians and carried a prisoner to Vienna, where, it is said, she had an interview with the emperor who, after a short confinement, set her at liberty and in 1792 she returned to Paris. Shortly after her arrival she was invited by the Jacobins to give an account of her experiences in Austria, and when she accepted the invitation and appeared at the club she was escorted to the rostrum leaning on the arm of Joseph Chénier.

She took part in the procession of the 20th of June, 1792, known as the "Day of the Black Breeches," [1] and also in the attack upon the

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 200.

Tuileries on the 10th of August, 1792,[1] and with her own sword struck down the royalist editor Sulean, who had time and again abused her in the columns of his paper.

As she lived sumptuously, dressed like a queen, and rode most aristocratically through the streets of the city in her own carriage, such luxury could but give offence to her sisters of the slums; and when, after the downfall of the Girondins, she evinced a reactionary spirit, the furies of the guillotine, whom she had so often led, stripped and publicly flogged her on the terrace of the Tuileries. They would have ended their work by ducking her in the basin of the fountain, if the police had not interfered.

During the "Reign of Terror" she became insane and was confined in a mad-house. In her paroxysms she would tear all clothing from her body, and, clinging to the bars of the window of her cell, would call upon Robespierre to aid her, harangue imaginary mobs, demand the blood of Sulean and rehearse the part she had taken in the thrilling events of the past. She died in 1817 in the Salpêtrière, a raving maniac.

The one grand dominating figure during this period of the Revolution, who centred in himself the attention of all France and whose surpassing genius, talents, and power seemed to throw other men into the shade, was Gabriel Honoré Riquetti, le Comte de Mirabeau.

No two men in the Revolution, in any of its periods, wielded greater power and influence

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 238.

than Mirabeau and Robespierre; yet it would be hard to find two men between whom a more marked contrast could be drawn. Mentally and physically they were totally unlike; hence their methods, tastes, desires, and appearance were entirely different. One was open and bold; the other secretive and cunning. One was luxurious; the other ascetic in his tastes. One was showy, impressive, fiery, defiant, and resolute; the other commonplace, reserved, and naturally timid. Yet Robespierre, the weaker man, reached in time — that is, in the days of the " Reign of Terror "— a more commanding position in directing public opinion and in controlling public affairs than was held by his mighty colleague Mirabeau in the first years of the Revolution.

A patrician by birth, Mirabeau had inherited all the passions and the vices of a wild and an unrestrained ancestry. He was by nature a voluptuary, to whom every sensuous pleasure was a temptation. With a desire and a capacity for indulgence and enjoyment, and with no moral principles to hold his appetites in check, he yielded to them freely. Although he espoused the popular cause, the Revolution did not change his tastes, but provided an opportunity to gratify them. He lived luxuriously and surrounded himself with flowers and music and art and beautiful women. He entertained with a most lavish hand and as a host was unrivaled even in Paris. At his table sat distinguished men from every walk in life. His delicate wines and dainty dishes almost corrupted the austere virtues of

Camille. Robespierre himself at one time fell under the spell of this magician.

Although fond of high living, Mirabeau was, on the other hand, a tremendous worker of indefatigable energy; his brain fairly teemed with plots and counter-plots. Coquetting with the court, allaying the suspicions of the radicals, developing and carrying out his mighty projects, attempting to stem the now rapidly flowing current of the Revolution, battling single-handed with his foes on all sides — for they assailed him from every quarter, and for recreation after his herculean labors indulging in gross dissipation, he was gradually undermining his strength, gigantic as it was.

His opponents irritated him by constant interruptions in the Assembly and openly assailed him in the clubs. Almost overwhelmed one night at the Jacobins' by a combined and concerted attack of a number of his enemies, he summoned all his strength, hurled them from him, one after the other, and emerged from the conflict in triumph. Robespierre does not appear to have taken any part in this controversy. It was mainly waged by the men who afterwards formed the faction of the Feuillants.

Holding so conspicuous a position, having so many opposing interests to satisfy, and without the support of a united party, Mirabeau concentrated upon himself personally the attacks of all factions. He labored not for the overthrow of the monarchy, but for the abolition of despotism.

and in his efforts to establish a constitutional throne he was subjected to a cross fire from the supporters of the ancient *régime* on one side and from the extreme revolutionists on the other.

He had made a great effort to form a combination with the king, the queen, Necker, and La Fayette; but the unfortunate part of it was that he could never solidify the mass. The king and the queen feared him; Necker and La Fayette mistrusted him and, at the same time, were envious of his power. To unite them he resorted to every conceivable device. He appealed to their patriotism, to their ambitions; he flattered, he cajoled, he pleaded; he played them against each other, and most adroitly laid his plans to encompass his ends. If he had been given the assistance he required he might have saved the monarchy.

His superb audacity, his invincible courage, his fertility of resource, his ingenuity, his comprehensive and constructive statesmanship, his skill as a politician, his overpowering eloquence and, above all, his supreme confidence in himself made almost everything possible with him. But the reconstruction of the monarchy was too heavy a burden on the shoulders of even this Atlas; he could not bear alone the superincumbent weight; he needed the aid that was close at hand but which he could not command.

It was his past life of profligacy, infamy, intrigue, and treachery that created distrust in the minds of all men; in consequence, he could not

secure the unreserved confidence of any. His magnificent genius was neutralized by his bad reputation.

He and the monarchy depended upon each other, but their lives were ebbing fast. In April, 1791, the great tribune passed away. "*Il mourut,*" said Baudin, "*à la fleur de son âge et au plus haut degré de sa gloire*"—"He died in the flower of his age and at the height of his glory." With his demise closed the first period of the Revolution.

Barnave, Duport, and the Lameths immediately after his death moderated their fierce radicalism. They now plainly saw, in the increasing violence of the Revolution, whither the State was drifting, and they quietly went to work to create a reaction. Their first step in this direction was to try to trace the threads of the many schemes that had been woven by the master hand of Mirabeau. This was impossible, and they soon found that it was far beyond their ability to fill the position once occupied by their old-time enemy.

The States-General met in May, 1789; Mirabeau died in April, 1791, so that there was a space of only about two years between these two events. Yet in this period more reforms had been effected than the most ardent and sanguine reformer at the beginning of the Revolution could have anticipated. The abuses of feudalism had been destroyed, as well as the salt monopoly, titles, privileges, exemptions, and pensions. The civil list had been reduced and modified and a

system of uniform taxation had been established; indeed, from a conservative's point of view, there was nothing further to be done but to restore order and to place the monarchy upon a firm foundation of constitutionalism.

But the Revolution was rushing on like a torrent and it was beyond the power of any faction to stay or even to divert its course. It now became nothing but a struggle among the parties for political power and supremacy.

When Mirabeau died Robespierre uttered no regrets; there was one obstacle less between him and his ambition. "Achilles is dead," he exclaimed, "then Troy will not be taken." "So long as Mirabeau lived," said Baudin, "Robespierre remained confounded with the crowd of deputies attached to the popular cause; he had the temerity to believe that after the death of this athlete he had no longer a superior." At one time Robespierre's admiration for Mirabeau had been very great; but it had since cooled. In his view Mirabeau was not to be trusted. Robespierre regarded him as a born aristocrat, naturally favoring the monarchy, as a paid agent of the court, a revolutionist only because his ambition found in the excitement of the Revolution a theatre for his talents and his genius. His vices, his tastes, his extravagance, his profligacy, and his venality were distasteful to the ascetic deputy from Arras, who could not reconcile such traits, habits, and conduct with the pure and simple doctrines of democracy.

Mirabeau died after but a few days' illness

and it was generally believed that he had been stricken down by the administration of a slow poison.

It is related in "The Memoirs of a Peer of France" that Robespierre, in an unguarded moment, boasted of having been concerned in a conspiracy that had for its object the murder of Mirabeau by poison.

The narrative recites that Marat furnished the recipe — taking good care that the ingredients should be deadly — and that Robespierre, with the aid of two or three other confederates, administered the potion while Mirabeau was at dinner. The story is very interesting but totally unsubstantial, and the whole fabric falls to the ground in view of the fact that the autopsy failed to find the slightest trace of poison.

It was perfectly natural, when a man of distinction died suddenly in those days of excitement and suspicion, that there should spring up a crop of rumors and all sorts of sensational stories. As usual, Robespierre was made to appear as a conspicuous actor in one of the alleged conspiracies. Irrespective of the autopsy, the story has no probabilities. In the first place, Robespierre was naturally reticent and was about the last man in the kingdom to reveal, had he been concerned in it, so important a secret. In the second place he was most abstemious in his habits and not given to talking in his cups. And finally, from all we know of his character, there is no reason to believe that he would act the part of a common assassin and enter into so vile a conspiracy.

CHAPTER XII

THE KING'S FLIGHT TO VARENNES — DANTON AND ROBESPIERRE ATTACK LA FAYETTE AT THE JACOBINS'— RETURN OF THE KING — DEPOSITION OF KING FAVORED — DUKE OF ORLEANS SUGGESTED AS SUCCESSOR TO LOUIS XVI.

The king soon tired of the espionage that dogged his footsteps and, fearing that his life was in danger, made arrangements to flee the kingdom.

On the night of the 20th of June, 1791, the royal family began their flight.[1] They reached Varennes, were recognized, and compelled to return to the capital. It was Jean Baptiste Drouet, postmaster of the town of Sainte-Menehould, who had the decision and courage to intercept the king's flight and prevent his escape. Drouet had been, at one time, a dragoon stationed at Versailles, and while there had frequently seen both the king and the queen. Although it was in the dusk of the evening when they reached Sainte-Menehould, he had but little difficulty in recognizing them even through their disguises. This man, who, in the language of Napoleon, "changed the face of the world," hesitated, at first, what plan to adopt for stopping the flight;

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 110.

but, shortly after the departure of the royal party from Sainte-Menehould, he mounted a horse and dashed wildly in pursuit of the fugitives, overtaking them at Varennes. Here, although it was midnight, he aroused the town, called out the mayor, ordered the ringing of the tocsin, and with some companions overturned a wagon on the bridge over which the king had to go to escape; then, hurrying back to the royal coach, which by this time was surrounded by a crowd of excited citizens, he boldly and positively identified Louis and urged the detention of the royal party. Had it not been for Drouet there is every reason to believe that the king would have escaped, and the Revolution then would have been a different story.

Paris, when it awoke on the morning of the 21st, was startled by the news that the king had fled. At first the truth could hardly be realized. The community seemed stunned; like a suddenly aroused sleeper, it was half dazed and recovered its senses slowly. As is usual under such circumstances of surprise and astonishment, not knowing what else to do, men and boys began running through the streets in every direction, adding to the general excitement without accomplishing any good. Crowds soon gathered and, as if actuated by one impulse, rushed to the Tuileries and sacked the palace from cellar to attic.

No one in all Paris was so surprised and affected by the sudden departure of the prisoners as La Fayette.[1] Time and again the king had

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 211.

DROUET

From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.
After a painting by Raffet

declared that he would not attempt escape, and La Fayette, deceived by these assurances, had often allayed the suspicions of the people by standing sponsor for the king's word. Of course, as custodian of the royal family, he was most bitterly denounced and abused, for some one had to be held responsible for the escape of the fugitives. He mingled with the people, quieted their fears, and characterized the king's conduct as infamous. During the day he visited the sessions of the Assembly and afterwards he thought it advisable to attend the meeting of the Jacobins and, if possible, quiet the howlings of the wild beasts in that jungle. Before his arrival Danton in his rage cried out: "If the traitors venture to show themselves here, I undertake the solemn agreement, either that my head shall fall on the scaffold, or that I will prove that their heads should roll at the feet of the nation they have betrayed."

When the general, accompanied by some of his friends, entered the hall, Danton boldly charged him with duplicity and treason. La Fayette displayed remarkable power of self-control and bravely withstood the attack.

Prior to the appearance of the general at the Jacobins', Robespierre, in the course of an impassioned speech, said: "I am not one of those who term this event a disaster; this day would be the most glorious of the Revolution did you but know how to turn it to your advantage. The king has chosen to quit his post at the moment of our most deadly perils, both at home and

abroad. The Assembly has lost its credit, all men's minds are excited by the coming elections. The *emigrés* are at Coblentz. The emperor and the king of Sweden are at Brussels; our harvests are ripe to feed their troops; but three millions of men are under arms in France, and this league of Europe may easily be vanquished. I fear neither Leopold nor the king of Sweden, but the enemies at home. That which alone terrifies me seems to reassure all others; it is the fact that since this morning all our enemies affect to use the same language as ourselves. All men are united and in appearance wear the same aspect. It is impossible that all can feel the same joy at the flight of a king who possessed a revenue of forty million francs, and who distributed all the offices of state amongst his adherents and our enemies. There are traitors then among us, there is a secret understanding between the fugitive king and these traitors who have remained at Paris. Read the king's manifesto and the whole plot will then be unveiled. The king, the emperor, the king of Sweden, d'Artois, Condé, all the fugitives, all these brigands are about to march against us. A paternal manifesto will appear in which the king will talk of his love of peace and even of liberty, whilst at the same time the traitors in the capital and in the departments will represent you, on their part, as the leaders of a civil war. Thus the Revolution will be stifled in the embraces of hypocritical despotism and intimidated moderation. Look already at the Assembly: in twenty decrees the king's

flight is termed carrying off by force. To whom does it intrust the safety of the people? To a minister of foreign affairs under the inspection of a diplomatic committee. Who is the minister? A traitor, whom I have unceasingly denounced to you, the persecutor of the patriot soldiers, the upholder of the aristocrat officers. What is the committee? A committee of traitors composed of all our enemies beneath the garb of patriots. And the minister of foreign affairs, who is he? A traitor, a Montmorin, who but a short month ago declared a perfidious adoration of the Constitution. And Delissart — who is he? A traitor to whom Necker has bequeathed his mantle to cover his plots and conspiracies.

"Do you not see the coalition of these men with the king and of the king with the European League? That will crush us! In an instant you will see all the men of 1789 — mayor, general, ministers, orators, enter this room. How can you escape Antony? Antony commands the legions that are about to avenge Cæsar; and Octavius, Cæsar's nephew, commands the legions of the republic. How can the republic hope to avoid destruction? We are frequently told of the necessity of uniting ourselves; but, when Antony encamped by the side of Lepidus and all the foes of freedom were united to those who termed themselves its defenders, naught remained for Brutus and Cassius save to die.

"It is to this point that this feigned unanimity, this perfidious reconciliation of patriots, tends. Yes, this is the fate prepared for you. I know

that by daring to unveil these conspiracies, I sharpen a thousand daggers against my own life. I know the fate that awaits me; but if, when almost unknown in the National Assembly I amongst the earliest apostles of liberty dedicated my life to the cause of truth, of humanity, of my country, to-day when I have been so amply repaid for this dedication by such marks of universal good-will, consideration, and regard, I shall look at death as a mercy, if it prevents my witnessing such misfortunes. I have tried the Assembly; let them in their turn try me."

This speech is characteristic of Robespierre. It is a laudation of his patriotism, and evinces a willingness to immolate himself upon his country's altar, if it be for his country's good. It was very adroitly phrased, however, for such an occasion, when men's minds were disturbed and their sympathies easily aroused. By this constant protestation of his patriotism, he was daily gaining in popularity. Outside of these features, however, the speech, it must be admitted, has real merit. It was patriotic enough to arouse enthusiasm and pathetic enough to stir the emotions. Eight hundred men, many of them with tears in their eyes, sprang to their feet and cheered the orator to the echo.

La Fayette, by great resolution and an exhibition of self-possession remarkable under the circumstances, soothed the anger and allayed the suspicions of the people. His life was in hourly peril, for his enemies spread the report in every direction that he was in the conspiracy, else the

king could not have escaped. Marat howled with rage and declared that the general had been seduced by the Austrian woman, and that he remained behind only to welcome the invading forces, under the leadership of Louis, whose purpose it was to burn the capital and deluge it with blood.

The men who had been most anxious to dethrone the king seemed the most incensed at his departure and they denounced him for doing that which their policy had forced him to do.

Madame Roland, in speaking of the conduct of Robespierre at this time, said he was greatly frightened at the turn events had taken, and he believed that the royal family would not have fled without first preparing in Paris a Saint Bartholomew for patriots. Pétion, Buzot, and Roland scoffed at such an idea, and declared that the flight of the king was an abdication, and, in order to profit by it, men's minds at once should be prepared for the republic. "Robespierre, sneering and biting his nails as usual, asked: 'What is a republic?'"

The capture and return of Louis set at rest all the fears and suspicions of the people, and proved convincingly the innocence of La Fayette.

The king's flight was considered by the radicals as an abdication, and a demand for the establishment of a republic was heard in all quarters. Many who had heretofore favored the monarchy were now outspoken in their desire for a popular government. It was argued that a king who attempted to abandon his kingdom was not

worthy to wear its crown, a ruler who deserted his people was not entitled to their allegiance. "No more king — let us be republicans," wrote Brissot in the columns of the "*Patriot François.*"

Robespierre in the Assembly demanded that civic crowns be given to those patriots who had arrested Louis and his family in their flight. "They deserve well of the nation," he cried, "and the people should be willing to bestow a distinguished honor upon those men to whom they owe so much."

Time always allays excitement. Matters soon quieted down and, strange to say, a decided reaction took place. The populace, when they returned again to reason, seemed so glad to have the king once more in their midst, housed in his palace, that they received without questioning the silly excuses and explanations he gave for his attempted escape. People generally are willing to accept as true that which they are anxious to believe. In fact, so strong had the sentiment grown in favor of the king, that when Billaud-Varennes at the Jacobins' proposed the consideration of the question as to whether a republic was not better for France than a monarchy, he was reprimanded by the chair and threatened with expulsion.

The reaction, however, was but temporary; the radicals were at work. Appeals from all quarters began to reach the Assembly asking for the establishment of a republic. Laclos, a deputy, proposed that petitions be sent into all the provinces to be covered with ten million signatures.

At the Jacobins', the sentiment soon had so changed that the deposition of the king was openly demanded, and it was moved that an opportunity be given to the people to express their views on the question. Danton declared: "And I, too, love peace, but not the peace of slavery. If we have energy, let us show it. Let those who do not feel courage to rise and beard tyranny, refrain from signing our petition." "The moment has now come," declared Robespierre, "when the people must decide whether or not they shall abide under the rule of that king who finds it to his interest to abandon them."

To change suddenly or abruptly from a monarchy to a republic is hazardous at all times, and many of the leaders, wiser and far more conservative than their followers, feared that conditions were not yet ripe for a change, and believed that it was necessary to create a stronger public sentiment in its favor before attempting to effect it.

In view of the unpopularity of Louis, a number of the retainers of the Duke of Orleans were suggesting him as a suitable candidate for the throne; but this movement met with little support and was most earnestly opposed by Robespierre. There was no benefit to be expected from a mere change of dynasty; for, if France was to remain a kingdom, Louis with his weakness was after all far better than his profligate cousin, the duke, whom Arthur Young described as a silly and stupid giggler. When this matter was submitted to Danton, he said that if anybody was to be the successor of Louis it must be his son, but as be-

tween the son and a republic he preferred the latter.

A retrospective view of the Revolution is interesting here because it is this point that marks the beginning of a new phase in its history. From the meeting of the States-General in May, 1789, to the 6th day of October of the same year, when the mob brought the king from Versailles to Paris, the scenes were tumultuous and exciting; but after this period, for almost two years, there was a comparative lull. The king was closely guarded in the palace of the Tuileries, but there was no purpose to deprive him of his crown and title. The Assembly effected many sweeping reforms in both Church and State, and was busily engaged in framing a Constitution that was to restrict but not to destroy royal authority. The emigrant princes were, of course, conspiring, but they acted with caution, for fear their conduct might arouse the slumbering mob and thus endanger the life of the king. The flight of Louis, however, was fatal to the monarchy, and from this time dates the effort made for its overthrow and the establishment of a republic.

The Revolution gradually grew more violent as time ran on, until it resulted in the overturning of the throne and the execution of the king, culminating in the " Reign of Terror."

CHAPTER XIII

ADDRESS ISSUED BY THE REPUBLICAN SOCIETY — THOMAS PAINE — VOLTAIRE — FUNERAL OF VOLTAIRE.

On the 1st of July, 1791, there appeared, posted on the walls of Paris and even nailed to the doors of the Assembly, an address signed by Achille Duchâtelet, a young colonel in the army, representing an association called "The Republican Society."

The address reminded the people of the unity of sentiment and the tranquillity that prevailed during the absence of the king; it held that his flight was not only an abandonment of his throne but an abdication of his power and title, and that the people were relieved from all allegiance to their sovereign; that all engagements between them were broken, and that the nation should renounce all intention of giving itself another king. It ended with the words: "Long live the Republic!"

It did not take much in those days of excitement and suspicion to create alarm, and the Assembly was thrown into consternation. If there was to be a change in the form of government the Convention had the power to effect it, but here was a mysterious society that treated the

monarchy as a thing dead, the king as having laid aside his crown, and announced the existence of a republic, thus virtually usurping the powers and the functions of the legislature. How far-reaching the association was in its influence no one could tell, and it was this uncertainty that caused the uneasiness. Strange to say, the proclamation created amazement rather than enthusiasm. The Assembly was not yet ready to dethrone a king, whom a year and a half afterwards it beheaded.

The address that created such an excitement was written by Thomas Paine, an Englishman who had been chosen as a deputy to the National Convention by the electors of Calais. He was born at Thetford, in Norfolk, in 1737. His father was a staymaker and a Quaker. The boy received a common-school education, for a time followed the business of his father, afterwards opened a grocer's shop, and subsequently was appointed an exciseman.

In 1774, he sailed for America with letters of introduction from Benjamin Franklin, whom he had met in England, and for whom he had a high admiration, which was reciprocated by the American sage.

He settled in Philadelphia, and edited a periodical called "The Pennsylvania Magazine." When hostilities began between England and her colonies, he strongly espoused the cause of the latter, and wrote a work entitled "Common Sense," which met with such approbation among his American friends that the legislature of Penn-

sylvania voted him five hundred pounds, and the University of Pennsylvania honored him with the degree of Master of Arts.

At first the book was published anonymously and created the greatest sensation. The authorship was attributed in turn to many Americans, among whom was John Adams, and it was some time before the real author was known.

He had a facile pen, his style in composition was clear, forcible, and graceful. Franklin looked upon him as one of the first writers of the age, and Jefferson, than whom few if any ever wrote purer English, said Paine was the only man in America who could surpass him in the use of his mother tongue. He is credited with having written the first draft of the Declaration of Independence, which means, perhaps, that he simply made some suggestions as to the contents of the great paper, for it is not fair to dim, in the slightest degree, the glory of its illustrious author.

In 1776, he published "The Crisis," which contained the oft-repeated quotation: "These are the times that try men's souls."

During the American Revolution he won the regard of Washington, and was appointed aide-de-camp to General Green. He shouldered a musket at Valley Forge and afterward took part in the battle of Trenton.

In 1787, he embarked for France, visited Paris, and then went to England. On the appearance of Burke's "Reflections on the French Revolution," he wrote "The Rights of Man," for the publication of which he was prosecuted. It was

at this time he was chosen a deputy to the French Assembly. While the trial was pending, he escaped from England, reached Paris in safety, and took his seat in the Convention. Marat always looked upon him with suspicion, but Danton and Robespierre seemed to have great respect for his judgment, and they frequently consulted with him on public questions.

He offended the Jacobins by voting at the king's trial against the sentence of death. "Let us kill the king," he said, "but not the man." Bravely he stood his ground at the peril of his life in defence of Louis, and even went so far as to prepare an argument showing why the king should not be condemned to execution. This paper he wrote in English and had translated into French and read to the Assembly.

In 1793, he was arrested and sent to the Luxembourg. While here in the shadow of the scaffold, he finished his work, "The Age of Reason." It was this book, because of its liberal doctrines, that injured him in the estimation of many of his friends in America.

He was released from prison, almost immediately after the death of Robespierre, remained in Paris until 1802, and then embarked for America, where he died in 1809, in the seventy-third year of his age. On his monument were inscribed the words of his creed: "The world is my country, mankind are my friends, to do good is my religion."

His address, which created such an excitement, declaring the monarchy was no more, was, after

all, only about a year in advance of the actual deposition of the king.

While Louis XIV was in the very zenith of his power, and reigned in all the glory and pomp of absolute authority at Versailles, a child was born in a suburb of Paris, who was, in time, to shake the throne, break down the barriers of caste, and undermine even the foundations of religion.

François Marie Arouet, better known under his pseudonym of Voltaire, was sovereign in the world of letters, the most influential writer of his age. He was born at Châtenay, in 1694. His father was a lawyer in affluent circumstances and of high social connections. The family belonged to the refined well-to-do middle class. The boy consequently enjoyed every advantage that wealth and position could afford. He was educated in a college under the care of the Jesuits. His talents were not only extraordinary but precocious, for at the age of seventeen he wrote a drama that even to this day holds its place in the French classics.

After his graduation he could have led a life of elegant leisure had he been so inclined, but instead he entered the lists as a reformer, and waged a relentless battle against wrong.

No man was ever better equipped for so desperate a fray, and the world never offered so great an opportunity to such a disputant. He came forward in the days of the regency, when the nobility and the hierarchy were corrupt and dissolute, and when scepticism had eaten into the very vitals of religion. Many of the upper clergy

by their profligate conduct refuted their professions of faith, and reflected upon the great institution they represented. The abuses in both Church and State were scandalous, and they became the objects of Voltaire's attacks.

Hypocrisy and injustice cowered under the shafts of his merciless satire. Pretension, sham, and fraud received no mercy at his hands. Ridicule was his strongest weapon, and his sneer had the force of logic. Like all scoffers he failed, at times, to distinguish the true from the false, and in his assaults upon the latter he often injured the former. He sometimes mistook the substance for the shadow. In his warfare against its errors, he made the mistake of attacking the Church itself.

Although Voltaire was a sceptic, he was not an atheist, but a most pronounced and impassioned deist. No one ever created so great a commotion and disturbance in the world's thought. He struck blow after blow, shattered idol after idol, and assailed with tremendous force the institutions of absolutism, intolerance, and bigotry. His struggle was to relieve man from the tyranny of arbitrary power, and to secure liberty of conscience from the thraldom of superstition.

His career was one of peril and vicissitude; time and again he had to flee from France to avoid imprisonment. Confined in the Bastile for his treasonable utterances against kings, he yet enjoyed a close intimacy with Frederick the Great, the most arbitrary monarch in all Europe.

He was one of the advance couriers of the

Revolution; he had carried the news of its coming, but he did not live to see it an established fact, his death occurring in 1778. Now, in 1791, it was proposed to honor his memory. "And why not," exclaimed Regnault de Saint Jean d'Angely. "It was he that held the torch of reason and enabled mankind to see the chains that enthralled them."

At the time of Voltaire's death, his body was furtively removed by night from Paris and interred in the cemetery of the abbey of Sellières, in Champagne. When this property was confiscated by the State, the question arose at once as to what disposition should be made of the remains of the great philosopher, and it was decided that the capital of the nation, where he had breathed his last, was the only appropriate place for the interment of so illustrious a man.

When his body reached Paris on the 11th of July, 1791, it was received at the barriers of the city by the authorities with the greatest solemnity. The coffin was carried to the very spot where had stood the Bastile and was placed on a pedestal composed of the stones that had formed the foundations of that old dungeon. On this pedestal was the inscription: "Receive on this spot, where despotism once fettered thee, the honors decreed to thee by thy country."

On the day of the funeral, all Paris was abroad; a vast concourse of people filled the streets, and every available space was occupied. The procession started in the morning and did not reach the Pantheon until far into the night.

The funeral car was drawn by twelve white horses, harnessed four abreast and held at the bridles by men dressed in antique costumes. The horses, it is said, were furnished by the queen.

The procession was led by a large body of cavalry; then followed the muffled drums, which add so much solemnity to such an occasion, with a sombre, throbbing music all their own. Artillery boomed at regular intervals throughout the day.

The sarcophagus was preceded, surrounded, and followed by the deputies of the National Assembly. In the line of procession were the departmental and municipal bodies, officers of the army, learned associations, students of the colleges, children of the schools, patriotic societies, military bands, regiments of regular soldiers, and the National Guard. Actors and actresses of the theatres were also in line to pay respect to the memory of the great dramatist. On a large pyramid, representing immortality, were inscribed the titles of his principal works, and the words: "He wrote 'Irène' at eighty-three and 'Œdipus' at seventeen."

His statue in gold was carried on the shoulders of citizens dressed in the costumes of different nations, while a golden casket contained the seventy volumes of his works. Busts of Rousseau and Mirabeau were also borne aloft.

The funeral car stopped in front of the house of M. de Villette, where Voltaire died. The building was covered with festoons of flowers, and bore the inscription: "His fame is every-

where, and his heart is here." Madame de Villette, to whom Voltaire had been as a father, placed a wreath upon the coffin, and young girls dressed in white scattered flowers before the car, while the crowd sang in chorus one of Chenier's hymns.

When the Pantheon was reached, the remains were carried into their last resting place in the presence of an uncovered multitude that showed its respect by a deep and reverent silence. His coffin was deposited between the bodies of Descartes and Mirabeau. Although the ceremony, in many of its features, was bombastic and theatrical, yet taken as a whole it was most impressive; to comprehend its full meaning one must enter into the spirit of the times and the occasion.

A few years before it had been difficult to find a decent place of sepulture for the great philosopher; the Church would not allow so impious a scoffer to lie in consecrated ground, and under cover of night he had been secretly interred in an obscure graveyard far distant from the capital. Now the nation, rejoicing in its liberation, could not pay him, upon whom it looked as one of the authors of its freedom, homage equal to its sense of gratitude. With reverence, and with a ceremony both pompous and splendid, it conveyed his ashes to a temple dedicated by a grateful people to the memory of great men: "*Aux Grands Hommes La Patrie Reconnaissante.*"

The Revolution was effecting marvelous changes, and, as we look through the lurid haze of that period, it seems like a phantasmagoria in

which all the objects are distorted, all things are out of proportion. Declarations of rights, nobles fleeing for their lives, heads on pikes, abolition of titles, surrender of privileges, destruction of abuses, federations of universal brotherhood, riots, massacres, flight of the king, looting of palaces, factional struggles, fraternal embraces, fusillades, generosity, ferocity, love, hate, all the emotions and passions of the human heart in full play, make up the features and incidents in this the greatest drama of the world's history; yet amidst all this confusion the Revolution stopped long enough to pay homage to him who had prophesied it and in whose teachings it found its justification.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ASSEMBLY DECREES THE INVIOLABILITY OF THE KING — FUSILLADE OF THE CHAMP DE MARS — ROBESPIERRE FINDS REFUGE IN THE HOUSE OF DUPLAY — DUPORT — BARNAVE — CHARLES LAMETH.

On the 15th of July, 1791, about three weeks after the return of Louis from Varennes, the Assembly passed a decree declaring the person of the king inviolable.

During the consideration of the question, Robespierre made a strong argument against the doctrine of the inviolability of the sovereign, and opposed most strenuously the passage of the act. He was listened to attentively, for his importance had greatly increased since the death of Mirabeau; but his efforts in this instance were without avail, for the Assembly carried the original motion by a heavy majority, and amidst great enthusiasm.

The measure was unwise and impolitic; instead of strengthening the safeguards of the king, it imperiled the monarchy, for it provoked anew the wrath of the people. It seemed to be a direct rebuke to the sentiments and the principles of the Revolution. A declaration that the king's person was sacred and that he could do no wrong

sounded like an echo of the ancient *régime*. The city at once became riotous and it required the best skill of La Fayette so to post the National Guards as to prevent an outbreak.

In order that the people might have an opportunity to express their views upon the question as to whether or not there should be a change in the form of government, it was decided by a committee of the Jacobins that a public meeting should be held on the Champ de Mars on Sunday, July 17th, for the signing of a petition by all those persons who favored the deposition of the king and the establishment of a republic.

At the same time the authorities issued a proclamation against a gathering for a purpose so revolutionary in its character.

On the day in question, men, women, and children assembled in holiday attire as if it were a festal occasion, evidently having no fear that the authorities would carry out their threats. And they had every reason to feel safe. The provisions of the riot act had been complied with to the letter. Twenty-four hours notice had been given to the authorities of the time and place of meeting, as well as an assurance that the people would be unarmed.

A large platform had been erected in the centre of the field upon which stood what was called the altar of the country; on this the petition was placed ready for the signatures of the people. Before the signing began, some one discovered under the platform two men — a barber and an old soldier with a wooden leg — who had bored

holes in the floor of the platform through which they hoped to view the well-shaped limbs of the *citoyennes*. These Peeping Toms had made arrangements for a day's outing, a sort of picnic, and had brought with them provisions and a keg of water. When discovered, not being able to make any satisfactory excuse for their presence, they were at once seized, and carried before a magistrate. Unfortunately, while on their way to prison, they were cut down by an angry mob and their heads borne aloft on pikes. They were supposed to be royalists and it was thought that the keg contained gun powder to blow up the platform.

Bailly, the mayor, at once raised the red flag, then, proceeding to the Champ de Mars, he read the riot act and ordered the people to disperse. He was mocked, hooted at, and defied. La Fayette then brought his troops into line and opened fire, when the crowd soon took to its heels, leaving on the field a number of dead and wounded — how many no one can tell, for the authorities suppressed the facts and the radicals exaggerated them.

This massacre was called the " Fusillade of the Champ de Mars." It lingered long in the memory of the people and was avenged by them when La Fayette was driven into exile and Bailly was sent to the scaffold.

Although another reaction favoring the king now set in, and although some of the popular leaders had to hide and flee for safety, yet from this event may be dated the real struggle be-

tween the monarchy and democracy. When the counter reaction came, as it did very shortly, even moderates and conservatives were classed as royalists. There were then only two opposing forces, and the battle had to end either in the restoration of the monarchy or in the establishment of a republic. The conflict was directly between the people and the king. It was the slaughter of innocent and unarmed citizens on the Champ de Mars that intensified the bitterness and more clearly defined the issues, and it was this unfortunate episode that was made the excuse for many of the subsequent excesses of the Revolution.

It was some time before the radicals recovered from their surprise and repulse, and it did look for a while as if they were finally suppressed, but the fires were only smothered, not extinguished.

Notwithstanding the many interruptions that marked the course of the French Revolution, its progress can be clearly traced step by step. The reactions were but intervals; they delayed its march only temporarily; they were merely breathing spells, for after each one the Revolution seemed to take on a fresh impulse, until at last its momentum made it irresistible and it swept to destruction everything in opposition to its progress.

It was while Robespierre was hurrying from the Champ de Mars, after the massacre, that he found refuge in the dwelling of the carpenter, Duplay, in the rue St. Honoré.

BARNAVE

From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.

Robespierre's sister Charlotte, in referring to this incident, says that while her brother was on his way home from the Field of Mars he was recognized and cheered by a crowd of enthusiastic admirers in front of the Church of the Assumption; that at this moment Duplay came out of his shop, and, seeing the embarrassment of Robespierre, invited him to take shelter in his home. The invitation was accepted and the hospitality of a night resulted in making this temporary refuge a permanent residence.

It is said that Madame Roland and her husband had so great an interest in Robespierre's welfare that they went to his lodgings in the Marais at eleven o'clock at night, to offer their house as an asylum.

The Assembly honored La Fayette with a vote of thanks and endorsed the action of the authorities. The instigators of the meeting were pursued with warrants of arrest. Marat disappeared from public view, and Danton fled to England. Robespierre, who had been most active in making preparations for the holding of the meeting, was not interfered with; Madame Roland had enlisted the influence of Buzot in his behalf, and he was thus protected from prosecution.

It was at this time that Duport, Barnave, the Lameths, Sieyès, and La Fayette withdrew from the Jacobins and organized the club of the Feuillants. Instead of closing the clubs that were in existence, they opened a new one, and thus added another factor of contention.

This group of men, conservatives by nature, education, and association, startled by the havoc they had wrought, would fain have retraced their steps, but it was too late; they had gone too far. They unconsciously aided in destroying the monarchy which they had intended only to reform.

Adrien Duport, the recognized leader of the new faction, had the attributes of the practical politician. He saw in the Revolution a great opportunity for his peculiar talents and he espoused the popular cause with zeal. Fond of intrigue, possessed of great executive and organizing ability, he had all the qualities that specially fitted him for party leadership. At first a most pronounced radical, he moderated his views when the Revolution grew too violent and sought to check its course, but he soon found out that it was much easier to start a conflagration than to extinguish it. Just before the September massacres he was thrown into prison, but was saved from assassination by the courage and the generosity of Danton.

Antoine Joseph Pierre Marie Barnave, deputy from Grenoble, who charmed the States-General and the National Assembly with his surpassing eloquence and who dared to grapple in debate even with the redoubtable Mirabeau, was a lawyer of renown in his province and of natural ability so great that it did not lose its lustre even in the capital. "He is a tree growing," said Mirabeau, "to become some day the mast of a line-of-battle ship." Etienne Dumont, who evidently did not like Barnave, describes him as ir-

ritable, jealous, ill-tempered, and presumptuous, but admits that his talents in debate were powerful and that his development as a parliamentary leader was most rapid.

Robespierre was never on friendly terms with Barnave, for the latter looked with contempt on the early efforts of the former to impress the Assembly with his feeble oratory, and the derision of Barnave more than once so aroused the anger and wounded the vanity of Robespierre that the breach between them could never be healed.

Barnave had been very carefully educated, was a scholar of broad culture, and a man of the finest sensibilities.

Although rather small in stature, he was of good figure, and his face was expressive and marked with intelligence.

He early espoused the principles of the popular cause and was outspoken in his denunciation of the abuses and the extravagance of the old *régime*. He boldly took the oath of the Tennis Court, favored the promulgation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and voted for the abolition of religious orders. His pronounced radicalism provoked the wrath of the royalists, and he was in consequence called several times to the field of honor.

As time ran on and as the violence of the Revolution increased, he moderated his views. Although from the first a radical reformer, he had always been a monarchist; it was his desire not to destroy the throne but to restrict its power.

He was too emotional and susceptible to be a great revolutionary leader. Brave, chivalrous, and sympathetic, his heart, at last, was touched with pity for the distresses of the queen; he espoused her cause, and for his disloyalty to the Revolution paid forfeit with his head.

The Lameths were three brothers: Theodore, Charles, and Alexandre. It was the last named that declined the honor of dancing with the queen at the final ball given at Versailles, for fear his acceptance of the distinction might lower him in the estimation of the radicals.

Charles was the most important and distinguished of the trio. He had fought with Rochambeau in America, and was wounded at Yorktown. In his heart was instilled a love of freedom, influenced in a great measure, no doubt, by his experience in the new world.

He had been left an orphan at an early age and Marie Antoinette adopted him as her foster son; his mother, a sister of Marshal de Broglie, having on her death-bed committed him and his brothers to the special favor and protection of the queen.

Upon his return from America, he was received at court with every mark of respect. He was admitted to the exclusive Trianon set, the queen showering honors upon him with a lavish hand, and he was appointed colonel of the royal *cuirassiers.* He was in reality a pampered child of royalty, living on the king's bounty. Every avenue to preferment was open to him, and he proudly stood as the representative of one of

CHARLES DE LAMETH

From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.

the most aristocratic families in France. Such a man, one would suppose, had the queen been in danger, would have rushed to her side and would willingly have risked his life in her defence. A mere insult to her should have aroused all the chivalry in his nature. He should have had for her almost the affection of a son for a mother; surely he was under obligations to the woman who had sheltered his orphanage and to whom he was indebted for his education and subsequent promotions. There was no one in the whole realm who should more quickly have plucked his sword from its scabbard in defence of the queen's life and honor than Count Charles de Lameth. But when the Revolution came, it found him organizing a political party in opposition to the court; he became one of the most pronounced revolutionists of that day, and a leading member of the Jacobins.

His violent radicalism, of course, provoked the enmity of the royalists, and he was challenged to a duel by the Duke de Castries, in which he was severely wounded. So great was his popularity at this time, that the rabble was easily incited to attack the duke's residence; although no lives were lost, the furniture was broken, and many works of art were destroyed and thrown into the street, an illustration of the petty vengeance of the mob, and proof of how well organized were the elements and forces of insurrection, for their conduct in this instance was unquestionably instigated by the popular leaders.

La Fayette, with a detachment of the National

Guard, arrived on the scene too late to prevent the destruction or to render any service, and simply stood by and watched the burning of the rubbish. Madame de Castries afterwards wittily and sarcastically remarked that she felt highly honored in having the general present to witness the sacking of her home.

In view of the kind and generous treatment he had received at the hands of the queen, the conduct of Lameth during the Revolution showed not only base ingratitude, but was closely akin to treason. It is almost impossible to believe that the most rabid revolutionist could have had respect for such an ally; men may use the traitor, but they despise the treason. They may conspire with the ingrate, but they never can forget nor forgive ingratitude. He and Robespierre were at one time on friendly terms, but they grew to be political rivals and bitter enemies.

The Revolution carried Lameth far out of his course, and he gladly would have retraced his steps; but it was too late. Frightened at the violence he had helped to create, he did all in his power to allay it; but he was unable to accomplish anything in that direction. With a number of moderates he organized a conservative club, through the influence of which they tried to temper public sentiment; but the current against them was too strong to stem, and they might as well have attempted to dam the Nile with bulrushes.

No one would find fault with his conduct had he been a moderate reformer, that is, had he fa-

vored the destruction of the flagrant abuses that had existed under the old *régime;* but to become so fierce a radical and to take a stand so antagonistic to the court, after having indulged in its frivolities and enjoyed its patronage, displayed a disposition almost unnatural. He even went so far as to excuse the conduct of the mob in the sacking of the palace at Versailles, the palace of that queen who had tenderly and affectionately nurtured and sheltered his youth.

CHAPTER XV

JOURNALISM AND JOURNALISTS — THE CAFÉS — THE GUIGNETTES — ÇA IRA — CARMAGNOLE

There is nothing that shows the progress of the Revolution more than the unrestrained license in which the Press indulged. Every safeguard for the protection of private and public reputation was broken down, and the newspapers carried their abuse far beyond the limits of law and decency. This was natural, perhaps, under the circumstances, for the passing events were stirring; men's minds were wrought up to a pitch of intense excitement, and the struggle from the very beginning was one of terrific bitterness.

The newspapers represented every phase of public opinion. Many of them were party organs, and in them the leading politicians and statesmen expressed their views on pending questions. It was through the columns of the "*Courrier de Provence*" that Mirabeau spoke in thunder tones to his constituents. The "*Point du Jour*" was the mouthpiece of Barère.

In May, 1792, Robespierre started a journal called "*La Défenseur de la Constitution,*" and it was in this paper that he gave his views in relation to the war, for his popularity had been somewhat affected because of his persistent opposition to its declaration.

By all odds the greatest journalist of the Revolution, however, was Camille Desmoulins. As a satirist he was incomparable, his ridicule of public men would set all Paris laughing. His literary style was of so high an order that it really ranks him among the great writers of France. As the editor of the "*Discours de la Lanterne,*" the "*Revolutions de Brabant,*" and the "*Old Cordelier,*" he exerted a powerful influence. He had the courage of his convictions, and had no hesitation in boldly expressing his views. His celebrated "*Histoire des Brissotins et Brissot devoilé*" led the way to the accusation and condemnation of the Girondins.

Marat's "*Ami du Peuple*" was a journal of a "yellow" type; abusive, ferocious, and sanguinary. Woe to the man who fell under the suspicion of its rabid editor. After the deposition of the king his paper was called the "*Journal de la Republique Française.*"

No matter what else may be said of him, Marat was no sham;[1] there was a rugged, savage honesty about him that induces, from every fair man, some sort of respect. He never bent the knee nor "burnt incense before the idols of power."

It is well known that the royalist journals were subsidized, and that a corruption fund was created to bribe the Jacobin leaders and journalists; in fact, Montmorin is said to have admitted that he had spent many millions in purchasing radical orators and editors, but there was none

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 55.

among all the revolutionists whose influence or even silence would have been worth so much to the monarchy as Marat's. It goes without saying, however, that no amount of money would have been a temptation to him; his poverty was squalid, abject. When he died his estate consisted, in cash, of one franc, and yet in his lifetime he could have sold his pen for a fortune.

"*Père Duchesne,*" edited by Hébert and Chaumette, reeked with filth. There is not a community in all Christendom, at this time, that would tolerate for a day the publication of so vile a sheet; it pandered to the lowest tastes, being smutty, irreverent, and atheistic. It was rather a pamphlet than a newspaper, the price was fifty sous a month, and from a financial point of view it was one of the most successful publications of that period.

Jacques René Hébert, the editor of this vile sheet, was born in Alençon, but came to Paris some time before the Revolution. He was employed as ticket seller or check taker at a theatre, and was dismissed for dishonesty; he afterwards entered the service of a physician whom he robbed. Knocked from pillar to post and living from hand to mouth, he eked out a precarious existence until, at last, he found a field for his peculiar activity in the exciting scenes of the Revolution.

He was a coarse, vulgar creature, and at heart a craven. At the queen's trial he cast an imputation upon her of so atrocious a nature that he disgusted even the common women of the slums.

and brought down upon his head the bitter denunciation of Robespierre.

The influence of Hébert in every direction was most fatal and pernicious, especially when he was made the chief of a political party. So violent did his paper become in its rantings, that he and the leaders of his faction were openly charged by the more conservative revolutionists with being agents of England, in the pay of Pitt, for the purpose of destroying the Republic by driving it to excess and anarchy.

He was accused and condemned in 1794, and when he went to execution he was so overcome by fear that he fainted several times in the tumbril before reaching the scaffold.

Pierre Gaspard Chaumette, who was associated with Hébert in the publication of "*Père Duchesne,*" was born at Nevers, in 1763. His father was a shoemaker who could not afford to give him any educational advantages, and the boy was compelled to start out early in life to make his way in the world. He was for a time an attorney's clerk in Paris, and while in this position acquired some little knowledge of the law; he subsequently received a short training in journalism under Prudhomme, who pronounced him an ignorant fellow.

He was not so coarse as Hébert, but he was just as radical and as extravagant in his notions. These two men endeavored "to dethrone the king of heaven as well as the kings of the earth," to abolish religion, and to destroy every sign and symbol of the Christian faith. They helped to

organize the "Festivals of Reason," and polluted with their silly profanations many of the churches in Paris.

In their view marriage was a mere agreement, its duration to be measured by the pleasure and determination of the contracting parties, to be entered into and annulled with no special form or ceremony. Morals, of course, were lax when the restraints of religion were removed; but under the influence of teachings so vile in regard to marriage, they grew worse and worse, and concubinage became almost a general custom. In the first three months of 1792, there were recorded in Paris 562 divorces and only 1,785 marriages. To meet this condition, unparalleled in modern society, the Convention decreed that bastards should be entitled to an equal share with legitimate children in succession and in the distribution of estates.

In no wise daunted by adverse criticism, the editors did not temper their style or utterance, and with every issue of the filthy sheet seemed to grow more violent. When the hawkers were selling the paper on the streets, their usual cry was, in order to attract the attention of passers-by: *"Il est bougrement en colère, le Père Duchesne"*—"Father Duchesne is in a thundering passion."

The original *"Père Duchesne"* was a character created by Lemaire and represented an old soldier, rough and crabbed, who smoked his pipe and went about expressing his views on public questions and growling at men and measures.

Hébert's "*Père*" was a clumsy imitation of the original.

"*La Chronique de Paris,*" edited by Condorcet, an aristocrat by birth, and a democrat by conviction, was most philosophical in its tone.

Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, was born in Picardy, in 1743. The family was ancient in origin and honorable in reputation. The boy was educated with great care at the College of the Jesuits in Rheims and at the College of Navarre in Paris.

He early gained distinction by the publication of a treatise on integral calculus, which attracted the attention of the learned men throughout the kingdom. He soon, however, entered the broader fields of literature and published the life of Turgot and the life of Voltaire, which latter met with great success.

Under a cold exterior, Condorcet concealed the most violent passions. He contributed several articles to the Encyclopedia, and D'Alembert, who knew him well, compared him to a volcano covered with snow.

Another writer described him as "a sheep in a passion." Madame Roland in speaking of him said: "His intelligence in relation to his person is a subtle essence soaked in cotton."

When the political tempest which had long been gathering over France finally broke, Condorcet gave his loyal support to the revolutionists and his pen was busy in advocating the principles of the new order.

From the very beginning he took a great dis-

like to Robespierre, looking upon him as a man of mere words and without talent. Plain, logical, and practical himself, he had no patience with the persistent talking of Robespierre in the Assembly.

At the king's trial, Condorcet voted for an appeal to the people. After the fall of the Girondins he was outlawed and had to flee for his life. Through the influence of some friends he found an asylum in the house of a Madame Vernet. Here he employed his leisure in finishing a work upon which he was engaged at the time of his proscription. Fearing, however, that he was putting the safety of his generous hostess in jeopardy, he made up his mind to find another place of refuge. "I am outlawed," he said to her, "and if I am discovered here you no doubt will share my fate." Madame Vernet, with a magnanimity that was truly heroic, answered: *"La Convention, Monsieur, a le droit de mettre, hors da loi, elle n'a pas le pouvoir de mettre hors de l'humanite; vous resterez."*—"The Convention, Sir, has the right to place you outside of the law; it has not the power to place you outside of humanity; you will remain."

Watching his opportunity, however, he escaped, and having been turned from the door of an old friend under whose roof he sought a night's lodging, he had to hide in the thickets and stone quarries of Clamart. Weary, hungry, foot-sore, and with garments tattered and torn, he came to the village, entered a tavern, and called for food. "Bring me an omelette," he

said. "How many eggs in your omelette?" was asked. "A dozen." "A dozen!" cried the landlady in surprise. "What is your trade?" "A carpenter." "O, no!" said the astonished landlady. "Carpenters have not hands like yours and they do not ask for a dozen eggs in an omelette."

It was soon noised about that an aristocrat in disguise had taken refuge in the inn. The villagers gathered at once and when Condorcet was searched it was discovered he had no "*carte de surete,*" but in his pocket was found a much-thumbed copy of Horace. He was seized and bound, haled before a magistrate and committed to prison.

When the gaolers came to his cell in the morning, they found him dead. Whether it was from exhaustion or from poison is an unsolved question.

Jean Louis Carra, the friend of Danton, a journalist of no mean ability and a demagogue from policy and principle, edited a paper called "*Annales Patriotique.*" There was no restraint placed upon the expression of its ultra views; it was revolutionary to the core.

Stanislas Louis Marie Fréron, in his "*Orateur du Peuple,*" was as vituperative as Marat, but without his originality and fanatical convictions.

Fréron was only twenty-two years of age at the opening of the Revolution, but he had already served an apprenticeship in journalism under the tuition of his father, who had published a period-

ical entitled "*L'Année Litteraire.*" The first edition of the younger Fréron's paper, when he entered the lists as a revolutionary editor, boldly declared war against the aristocrats of every age, sex, and condition. He naïvely stated that he was in sound health, possessed of good spirits and had been assured by his mother that he had a pretty and a nimble wit. Fréron was utterly without principle, but his paper, nevertheless, exerted considerable influence. Justin McCarthy declares that he but parodied the flashes of Camille's wit and aped the scowl of Marat.

Claude Fauchet published the "*Bouche de Fer.*"

The "*Journal des Jacobins*" disseminated broadcast the views of the revolutionary clubs. It was edited and published by Laclos.

Brissot, the leader of the Girondins, was the editor of the "*Patriot Français.*"

The "*Journal Logographique,*" and later the "*Logotachgraphe,*" which lasted for a short time, suspending its publication in May, 1793, claimed to give the fullest and most accurate reports of the speeches delivered in the Convention.

The "*Moniteur*" also gave in detail the debates and parliamentary proceedings. It was one of the leading papers of that period, had an extensive circulation and was published by Panckoucke, a prototype of the enterprising newspaper proprietor of to-day. He owned several journals, and conducted them successfully and profitably.

It is in the columns of the "*Moniteur*" that many of the famous speeches of the distinguished orators of the Revolution have been preserved. Most of the speakers wrote their speeches and carefully revised them for the press. This was fortunate, for otherwise they would not have been adequately reported. The shorthand writers in those times were not as expert as the stenographers of the present day.

Danton's speeches were delivered on the spur of the moment; they were outbursts, and one can readily see in reading them that he spoke rapidly and in consequence must have been very hard to report. No doubt much that he said has never reached us, for he went to no pains to revise his speeches for publication.

Vergniaud and the other distinguished orators, on the other hand, took the greatest care in writing their speeches, and revised them even after their delivery. Robespierre especially was particular in these matters, and many of his speeches have come down to us through the "*Moniteur*" almost word for word.

Robespierre was just the sort of man to keep himself prominently in the public eye by means of the newspapers, and he was careful to see that his speeches were reported in full and *verbatim*.

Billaud-Varennes, whose boast was that he himself was not an orator, sneered at the desire of Robespierre to appear so constantly in public print, and attributed it to his excessive vanity. As was said by Mirabeau of La Fayette, so may

it be said of Robespierre: "He loved the glory of gazettes."

To counteract the influence of the revolutionary journals, the royalists at an early day entered the field; but they made no impression on the public mind. In their efforts to save the monarchy they did not support their views with serious argument, but spent their time and wasted their opportunities in ridiculing the "antics" of the Convention, exaggerating the mistakes of the radicals, and personally abusing the opponents of royalty. Scurrility and ridicule took the place of logic and wit.

The royalist journals, "*Ami du Roi*" and the "*Actes des Apôtres,*" edited respectively by Royon and Rivarol, were at first very bitter in tone; but as the violence of the Revolution increased they moderated the expression of their views and finally ceased publication.

Sulean was about the most vituperative writer in the royalistic class. As already told, he was killed by the well-known courtezan, Théroigne de Mericourt, on the 10th of August, 1792, while on his way to the Tuileries with a band of confederates to aid the king.

We have named but a few, a very few, comparatively, of the editors and newspapers of that period. It was a day of journalism; the transpiring events were sudden, startling and interesting, and everybody was anxious to keep informed on the history of current changes and transactions. "Newspapers were everywhere," says Hugo; "wig-makers curled women's wigs in public while

the master read the '*Moniteur*' aloud." It was through the papers that the people were taught the purposes and the principles of the Revolution. The teachings of Voltaire instead of being only the philosophy of the *salons* now became as well the gospel of the slums.

There grew into favor a custom of publishing "*Journaux affiches,*" which were posted on walls and fences and around which groups of people gathered and discussed the contents; thus those who were unable to read or could not purchase papers were informed of the news. Wandering orators hired by the clubs would mount improvised rostrums and address on the topics of the day the crowds assembled around the posters. These were missionaries sent out by the College of the Propaganda of the Revolution to teach the principles of the new order and they scattered broadcast the seeds of sedition.

One young, enthusiastic revolutionist, named Varley, dragged a kind of pulpit about with him so as to harangue the people in the public gardens and at the street corners.

The coffee houses were great centres for the dissemination of news. In fact, as says Goncourt, they became the vocal press of the Revolution. There were more than six hundred of them in Paris at the beginning of the reign of Louis XVI, and they greatly increased in number as time progressed, especially after the fall of the Bastile. The Palais Royal was filled with them and this locality became the common resort of the people. Here all public questions were

argued and considered. Rumors filled the air, and the latest news, whether from the provinces or the seat of war, was announced and put in circulation. The *cafés,* in a great measure, supplanted the wine shops and the tap-rooms, and were frequented by women as well as by men. The *citoyennes,* in high plaited caps adorned with the national cockade, came in the afternoon with their husbands and friends to take a cup of coffee, to gossip, and to hear the news. It was in the evening, however, that the Palais Royal presented the most animated scene. Gas and electric lights were, of course, wanting, but there was no economy in the use of candles and lamps, and they made a brave showing, for from every shop window as well as from every *café* poured a flood of light.

In the crowds could be seen the broad-rimmed, high-crowned hats of the fops or "*Muscadins,*" the large black three-cornered hats of the National Guards, and the conspicuous red caps of the *Sans Culottes,* that resembled poppies in a field of stubble. There, too, could be seen, mingling in the crowds, strolling through the gardens, or taking refreshment at the tables with gay companions, the ladies from the *maisons de joie* — priestesses of Aphrodite. They wore high-crowned white and yellow straw hats with waving feathers, low-cut, tight-fitting dresses of bright colors, and broad tricolored belts made of silk ribbon. They carried large fans, which they gracefully used and, when occasion offered, handled most coquettishly.

There was very little drunkenness in the *cafés;* in many of them only coffee and mild drinks were served. Later in the Revolution, when coffee was scarce and dear, the true Jacobin, whose virtue was to indulge in no extravagance, would call for a glass of water and a newspaper. In many of the *cafés,* chess, draughts, dominoes, and billiards were the amusements. Each *café* had its political color and its particular patrons. The proprietors were, as a rule, well-known men, and several of them rose to distinction.

The Jacobins, the Dantonists, the Robespierreists, the Girondins, the Hébertists, the reactionists — all had their special *cafés.* These places were the storm centres of the Revolution.

Robespierre was not a public-garden or street-corner orator; he had not the voice nor the presence to impress an out-door crowd. In imagination we may see him strolling through the gardens, sipping his coffee at a *café,* listening to the furious harangues of the speakers, preserving at all times his serious dignity, and conspicuous everywhere because of his aristocratic manner and dress.

After the execution of the Girondins, the moderates were timid and all except the most courageous avoided public expression and discussion of political topics.

During the "Reign of Terror," the Committee of General Safety employed a crowd of husky rowdies armed with stout sticks, "*les tapes durs,*" to pick quarrels with the reactionaries who expressed their views too plainly in public; and in

consequence brawls and hand-to-hand fights were of frequent occurrence. Occasionally, a person who declared sentiments not in sympathy with public opinion would be ducked in the fountain of the Palais Royal, amidst the jeers and the laughter of the crowd.

Although the *cafés* had become the most popular resorts, the taverns and wine-shops still flourished in many localities, but were frequented and patronized by the rougher and coarser elements of the community.

The *guignette* was the precursor of the modern music hall and was a *café,* a wine-shop, and a vaudeville show combined. Refreshments were served on long wooden tables, which, in many instances, were arranged under canvas tents. In the centre of the tent was erected a platform or stage for the singers and dancers. An orchestra, consisting of two, three, or four musicians, would accompany the performers, and enliven the intervals between songs and dances by playing popular and patriotic airs.

In the suburbs of Paris there were some *guignettes* that were veritable rustic bowers, embosomed and sheltered in the woods; these places were called *courtilles* to distinguish them from the urban *guignettes,* the word *courtille* meaning a small garden or grove. Here wild scenes were often witnessed, and the audience wrought up to excitement and enthusiasm by liquor and patriotic fervor would join in the chorus or even take part in the dance.

Marie Antoinette is said to have visited by

night one of these gay resorts, accompanied by her brother-in-law, the Count d'Artois. Although in disguise, the queen was early recognized; but the people present were polite and considerate enough to refrain from annoying her, although they in nowise abated their revels. She declared afterwards that it was one of the most delightful experiences of her life.

Popular music had a great influence upon the public in France during the stirring scenes of the Revolution. The French are an excitable, emotional people, easily aroused to action and specially susceptible to the influence of song. It was a wise man who said: "Let me write the songs of a people and I care not who makes the laws." There is more meaning in this expression than at first appears.

The two most popular songs of the French Revolution were the "*Ça ira*" and the "*Carmagnole.*" The "*Marseillaise,*" of course, was in a higher class than these, becoming in time the national hymn; but we are now referring particularly to the street songs.

The origin of the phrase "*Ça ira,*" as the title to one of the great revolutionary songs, is of peculiar interest, especially to Americans.

When Benjamin Franklin was an ambassador to the Court of France, he was most popular among all classes in Paris from the proletariat to royalty itself, and everything the old philosopher said was taken up and repeated until at last it passed current through the whole realm. He was constantly asked the question: "How pro-

ceeds the war with England?" and his answer almost invariably was: "*Ça ira*"—"It will go." The phrase came into popular use and in time was adopted as the name of the fiercest Jacobinistic song of the Revolution. It was the battle cry of the rabble.

> "*Ah! ça ira, ça ira, ça ira!*
> *La Liberté s'etablira*
> *Malgré des tyrans; tout réussira.*" [1]

The "*Carmagnole,*" another revolutionary song and dance, took its name from a long-sleeved waistcoat worn by the laboring people. This garment was so universally used by this class of citizens that in time its name was adopted as a distinguishing designation for a fierce Jacobin.

The English referred contemptuously to the French troops as *Carmagnoles.*

The verses were mere doggerel, but the song had a rollicking air and the dance was so energetic in character that it aroused the emotions and passions to such a degree that under its influence men would get almost into a frenzy. It had the same effect upon a mob of Jacobins that a war dance would have upon a band of wild Apaches. Mercier aptly describes it as "a whirlblast of rags, precursor of storm and destruction."

One of the most popular verses of the song re-

[1] "Ah! It will succeed; it will succeed!
Liberty will be established
In spite of tyrants; all will prosper."

lated to the queen, and this will give an idea of its general style and metre:

"Madame Veto avait promis
De faire égorger tout Paris
Mais le coup a manqué
Grace à nos cannoniers.
Dansons la Carmagnole,
Vive le son, vive le son!
Dansons la Carmagnole,
Vive le son du cannon!" [1]

The song grew to a great length as the Revolution advanced, for every event or incident brought forth a new stanza.

In one of Barère's reports on the army of Italy, he describes an attack made by the Piedmontese on the outposts of the French, and says that the *Sans Culottes* — he thus refers to the French troops — so despised the slaves of Piedmont that a company of scouts marched against them with their guns slung over their shoulders, dancing the *Carmagnole.* The report goes on to say that the Piedmontese were so frightened at this manner of attack that they precipitately took to their heels and left the French victors of the field.

[1] Madame Veto had promised
To slaughter all Paris,
But the blow miscarried
Thanks to our cannoneers.
Let us dance the Carmagnole,
Long live the sound of cannon!
Let us dance the Carmagnole,
Long live the sound of cannon!

CHAPTER XVI

REVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION — ROBESPIERRE URGES THE IMMEDIATE ADOPTION OF THE CONSTITUTION — THE CONSTITUTION ADOPTED — ROBESPIERRE RETURNS TO ARRAS AND IS GIVEN AN OVATION — THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CONVOKED — THE GIRONDINS — BRISSOT — VERGNIAUD — GENSONNÉ — GUADET — ISNARD — ORATORY IN FRANCE

On August 5, 1791, the Assembly began the final revision of the Constitution. With the king a captive, the nobility scattered, the Church without influence, the radicals and the conservatives both in favor of restricting the king's power, it seems as if the work incident to the building of a constitution ought to have proceeded without the angry contention that accompanied it. Political parties and the struggle among them for supremacy provoked the bitterness.

The National Assembly was drawing to a close; its labors were nearly completed; the vow taken by the deputies at the Tennis Court was about being fulfilled. It had been a remarkable congress; its roster held some of the most distinguished names in the history of France; it had revolutionized the nation, had destroyed the obnoxious features of the ancient *régime,* and

was about to place the monarchy which had heretofore been absolute upon a constitutional basis.

Many of the men who were radicals at the beginning of the Revolution had moderated their views, either seduced by the court, or their confidence in popular government shaken by the violence of the mob; but this accession to the ranks of the conservatives had no appreciable effect upon the political situation; in fact, it only increased the contention and bitterness between the factions.

Robespierre struck many a blow in the forging of the Constitution and combated at every turn and with every weapon at hand the triumvirate of Duport, Barnave, and Lameth, and the motions of those revisionists who were determined to save as much of the royal power as was possible.

When the question arose as to whether or not the adoption of the Constitution should be submitted to a popular vote, Robespierre argued that the people had reposed their power in the delegates and to ask them to sanction the work of the Convention was to presume they had no confidence in the judgment of their representatives. "Let us not," he exclaimed, "delay the settlement of this matter by a *referendum,* but relieve the suspense and anxiety of the country by the immediate adoption of the Constitution."

As to its acceptance by the king he said: "Behold us, then, arrived at the end of our long and painful career; it remains only for us to give the Constitution stability and duration. Why are we asked to submit it to the acceptance of the king?

Its fate is independent of the will of Louis XVI. I do not doubt he will accept it with delight. An empire for patrimony, all the attributes of the executive power, forty millions for his personal pleasures — such is our offer! Do not let us wait before we offer it until he be away from the capital and environed by ill-advisers. Let us offer it to him in Paris. Let us say to him: 'Behold the most powerful throne in the universe — will you accept it?' Suspected gatherings, the system of weakening your frontiers, threats of your enemies without, manœuvres of your enemies within — all warn you to hasten the establishment of an order of things which assures and fortifies the citizens. If we deliberate when we should swear, if our Constitution may be again attacked, after having been already twice assailed, what remains for us to do? Either to resume our arms or our fetters." Then, looking towards the seats of Barnave and the Lameths, he added: "We have been empowered to constitute the nation and not to raise the fortunes of certain individuals in order to favor the coalition of court intriguers, and to assure to them the price of their complaisance or their treason."

The king, when informed that the Constitution had been adopted, insisted upon appearing before the Assembly and publicly accepting its provisions. "I come," he said, "into your midst solemnly to consecrate myself to the Constitutional act, and I swear to be faithful to the nation and the law, to maintain the Constitution and to carry its decrees into effect!"

The Assembly stood while the king made this impressive vow, and when he returned to the Tuileries the deputies accompanied him. The procession passed through throngs of excited and exultant people. Cheers for the king and even cries of "Long live the queen" rent the air, while salvos of artillery announced to the world the glad event.

The closing of the stormy sessions of the Assembly and the universal acceptance of the Constitution seemed to mark the opening of a new era in the history of France.

The returning delegates were received with open arms by their constituents. Robespierre, upon his arrival at Arras, was welcomed like a conqueror, the National Guard upon his entrance acting as an escort of honor; there was a general illumination; he was accorded a public reception, was crowned, and lauded, and in fulsome oratory designated a Savior of France.

In November, 1791, after a few weeks' vacation in Arras, he returned to Paris to take up the duties of his office as Public Accuser to the Tribunal of the Seine.

In the intoxication of their joy, the people imagined that the Constitution would secure and guarantee all the blessings of free government; it took some time for them to reach their sober senses, but when they did they found that their hopes were mere delusions.

The instrument was a compromise; it had re-enthroned an abdicated and imprisoned king but had shorn him of his power; it had re-established

the monarchy, only in form to be sure, but at a period when the people thought the time was ripe for the erection of a republic. It was but a makeshift, and was popular only while the shouts and the enthusiasm of the people continued. When after their jubilation they began to study and test its provisions, it was found to be too radical for the monarchists; too monarchistic for the radicals. Although the king had accepted it with every pledge of loyalty no sooner were his promises given to support it than he began to conspire to destroy it.

The new congress, called the Legislative Assembly, was convoked October 1, 1791. A decree, in the nature of a self-denying ordinance, had been enacted in the former legislature, upon the motion of Robespierre, which provided that the members of the National Assembly should not be eligible to re-election, and the new body was in consequence composed of men without legislative experience and unknown to the country at large. Madame Roland, in referring to the new assembly, said it resembled more than anything else a council of village attorneys.

Considerably more than half the members were lawyers. Many of them had come to the capital with reputations as great orators in their provinces, and they were anxious not only to win fame through their eloquence, but also to lose nothing in comparison with the distinguished members of the National Assembly.

The king had speeded with his blessing the

parting of the old congress, but he welcomed the new one with an indifference and a coldness that wounded the pride and the self-importance of its members. In retaliation for his rudeness, the Assembly by solemn decree stripped the king of his title "Sire," an affectionate designation used from time immemorial in petitioning or addressing his Majesty; and all Paris, at a rebuke so foolish, at vengeance so petty, held its sides in derisive laughter. The journalists gave full play to their wit, and found ample opportunity to ridicule the antics of the unsophisticated legislators. But time soon brought the knowledge that was needed, notwithstanding the absence of the experienced members of the old congress; the new assembly was found to contain many men of exceptional ability and of incomparable eloquence.

The Girondins, a political party or rather faction, composed in the main of deputies from the Gironde, a department located in the southwest of France, the chief town of which is Bordeaux, held the ascendency in the new Convention. Dumouriez, classed with them, was in the ministry and without doubt the ablest man in it.[1] The parlors of Madame Roland were the rendezvous of the clan.

They represented the well-to-do middle class. In their ranks were lawyers, scholars, and orators of conspicuous eloquence. They were the romancers of the Revolution and drew their inspiration from the history and the heroism of ancient

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 191.

Rome. They never spoke but they transported themselves in imagination to the Capitol or to the Forum.

They were greater philosophers, scholars, and orators than politicians. When it came to political scheming, they were far outclassed by the Jacobins. The latter were ultra-revolutionary; they held no middle course, always had their purposes well defined, and appreciated the fact that political mastery was to be secured only by unity, organization, and force. The bitter conflict between these two factions resulted in the deluging of France with blood. Brissot was the leader of the Girondins, and Vergniaud their greatest orator. The Jacobins, in the death-struggle with the Girondins, were led by Robespierre, and never in his whole political career did he show greater talent for leadership.

Jean Pierre Brissot, called the "*âme politique*" of the Girondins, came from Normandy. So great was his influence in the councils of his faction, that his leadership was acknowledged, and the party was designated the Brissotins as well as the Girondins.

He was born in a village near Chartres in 1754, being the son of a pastry cook; it was from this fact that the saying arose that he had all the heat of his father's ovens. He spent some time in preparing for admission to the bar; but, abandoning his purpose in this direction, he turned author, and before he was twenty years of age published several works, one of which caused his arrest and imprisonment in the Bastile. He was

a born agitator and pamphleteer. As a politician he was clever and not scrupulous in the adoption of means to effect an end. A stout and lusty partisan, he was willing to sacrifice anything to advance the interests of his faction.

At heart he was a real reformer and a relentless foe to tyranny. During the Revolution he wielded considerable influence through the columns of a newspaper he edited called "The Patriot," which became the organ of his party. He early crossed swords with Robespierre and they grew to be bitter and uncompromising enemies. At the time of the king's trial Brissot would gladly have saved Louis; but he did not have the courage of his convictions and voted for death, sacrificing the life of the king rather than imperiling the safety of his party.

Brissot was of medium height, slight in figure, and of pale complexion. He was an ardent admirer of the Americans, and having adopted the garb of a Quaker, nothing pleased him more than to be taken for one.

Pierre Victurnien Vergniaud was born at Limoges, in 1759. It was through the favor of the great Turgot that he secured a scholarship in the College du Plessis at Paris. Pursuing his studies diligently, he graduated from this institution with high honors and had even at that early period of his life the reputation of being deeply learned in the lore of the ancients. At the time of the meeting of the States-General, he was successfully practicing in Bordeaux his profession of law. He was not elected a deputy to the Con-

vention in 1789, but he warmly espoused the cause of the Revolution from the very start.

He was tall and heavily built, but had the slouchy carriage of a man indolent by nature. He required stimulation to bring his talents into play; but, when once aroused, his eloquence was of the highest order. His voice was deep and rich in its tones and capable of expressing every emotion.

Mirabeau, Barnave, Isnard, and Vergniaud were unquestionably the greatest orators produced by the Revolution; in fact, they stand in the front rank of the world's leading masters of the art, whether ancient or modern. Vergniaud, however, was the first in this immortal group; between him and his colleagues there was a difference, hard to define, and yet distinct enough to mark his superiority. In his impassioned flights he must have been sublime. Although poetic, imaginative, and emotional in temperament, he had the power of close analysis and logical reasoning; his reading having covered a vast field, he was never at a loss for apt quotation, illustration, allusion, or comparison. His prepared speeches were models in composition.

A man more of words than of action, incapable of mastering details, without executive or organizing ability, he never became a supreme party leader, and his commanding position and influence were due alone to his extraordinary eloquence. When in the tribune he was a king among men; he commanded their admiration; he moved them to tears or aroused them to exaspera-

tion; he played upon their emotions at his will. But at the council board he was indifferent and unimpressive.

According to the testimony of all his acquaintances he was one of the most lovable of men; kindly, gentle, and ever considerate of the feelings of others. In his famous reply to Robespierre he revealed the real sentiment of his heart when he declared that although "some men seek to accomplish the Revolution by terror, it would be my wish to accomplish it by love." He unfortunately was without that force and decision of character that make men heroic, and voted for the death of the king after having only the day before scouted the idea that he could do such a thing.

At the time of his own trial and execution, however, he displayed the true heroism of his nature. While in prison he was reduced to a state of destitution, his garments were in tatters, and he was without means to purchase a suit in which to appear while going to the scaffold. His brother-in-law came to the jail to relieve his needy condition, and brought with him his little son. The child, when he saw his uncle, was so shocked at his appearance that he burst into tears. Taking the little fellow on his lap, Vergniaud said: "Look well at me, my child; when you are a man you can say that you saw Vergniaud, the founder of the Republic, at the most glorious period of his life and in the most splendid costume he ever wore — that in which he suffered the persecution of wretches, and in which he prepared to

die for liberty." He went to execution without displaying the slightest fear, his grand voice singing in exultation the inspiring strains of the Marseillaise.

Gensonné and Guadet were also prominent in the councils of the Girondins. They were men of high character and marked ability and were able speakers. But next to Vergniaud as an orator among the members of the Girondins must be named Maximin Isnard. He came from Provence and was the son of a wholesale perfumer at Grasse. His father had him educated for a literary career. He studied his politics in the classic states of Greece and Rome and lived in the atmosphere of the ancients. His eloquence was as fervent as his southern blood; his impassioned words were born in the heat of inspiration. He could incite the fury of his hearers or lead them persuasively to conviction. The first night he appeared and spoke at the Jacobins', he scored a triumph; he swept the audience off its feet and closed amidst a whirlwind of applause.

When the allies were threatening the invasion of France, he cried out defiantly in the Assembly: "Tell Europe that you will respect the constitutions of all other countries, but that if a war of kings be raised against France you will raise a war of people against kings."

He was a bitter partisan and not always temperate in his speech. At the time the Girondins were in a death-struggle with the Mountain he declared: "If by fatal chance, in any of the tumults which since the 10th of March are ever

GENSONNÉ

From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.
After a painting by Raffet

returning, Paris were to raise a sacrilegious hand against the national representatives, France would rise as one man in never-imagined vengeance and cause such ruin that soon the traveler coming to locate the site of the city of the universe would have to ask on which side of the Seine Paris had stood." This was eloquence to a high degree, but it was most ill-timed, for it aroused the anger of the Parisians and resulted in sweeping the Girondins from power.

These men — Brissot, Vergniaud, Gensonné, Guadet, and Isnard — were the leaders of a great party, a party of lofty purposes that hoped to lead France to freedom and to glory; but alas! had not wisdom enough to reach its ideals or even to save itself from destruction. None of the factions had so many eloquent and distinguished speakers, but unfortunately for the welfare of the Republic the party was stronger in declamation than in organization and political management.

The French Revolution produced a great array of orators, and it is through their orations that we can breathe the atmosphere and enter into the real spirit of those stirring and exciting times. Oratory during the Revolution was born of the existing conditions; it was but a reflection of the hopes and ideals of an enfranchised people; it was the impassioned utterance of their longings and desires. Speech had been pent up so long that when it escaped from its thraldom it broke forth in a natural and an exultant eloquence. Under the old *régime* the pulpit and the bar alone gave an opportunity for the cultivation and dis-

play of oratory; there was no political arena in an absolute monarchy where men could struggle in debate and argue public questions, for all power was monopolized by the privileged classes; there was no such thing as freedom of speech. But the Revolution seemed to be the dawning of an era of light, of hope, of promise, and men became inspired under the new influence. Eloquence finds its true expression only in the atmosphere of freedom. It was before Athens passed under the yoke of Philip and while she was still free that Demosthenes thundered, and it was during the days of the republic that all the great orators of Rome flourished.

Bossuet, Bourdaloue, Fléchier, Mascaron, and Massillon brought pulpit eloquence in France to its highest development; but that class of oratory appealed only to the fears and the imaginations of men and in a vainglorious and an intolerant reign, like that of Louis XIV, it became adulatory in style, subservient in tone, and dogmatic in expression.

A very large number of the delegates of the Third Estate in the Assembly had been practicing lawyers; they had harangued the juries in the municipal and provincial courts, but in Paris in the hall of the Convention they found a new theme and a broader field for their eloquence.

The French language, spirited, vivacious, facile, concise, with its direct derivation from the Latin, is a great vehicle for the conveyance of thought and the development of eloquence; but never did it assume so picturesque and so en-

thusiastic a form as in the stormy days of the French Revolution.

The reason why oratory played so important a part in the legislative bodies of the Revolution was because the Assemblies were not only arenas for the display of popular eloquence, but also because they offered great opportunities for real eloquence to win substantial victories. The majority of the deputies, to be sure, were divided into factions; but outside of these factions were many independent members, constituting what was called the "Marsh" or the "Plain," who were not controlled nor even influenced by factional or party spirit. It was these men that the great orators strove to win. These floaters could not be driven into line by party whips; their minds were open to conviction, and they could be persuaded by argument. Mirabeau, Vergniaud, Danton, and Robespierre time and again appealed to these men, and their votes often won the day.

In the British Parliament and in the American Congress, an orator does not expect to win votes from the opposition save in exceptional cases; even the logic of Burke and the eloquence of Webster could not break through party lines and they had no "Marsh" or "Plain," as in the French Assemblies, to which they could appeal. The remarkable display of oratory produced by the French Revolution is therefore more readily comprehended.

CHAPTER XVII

THE GIRONDINS FAVOR WAR — ROBESPIERRE OPPOSES DECLARATION OF WAR — WAR DECLARED — ACCUSATION OF THE EMIGRANT PRINCES — MIRABEAU THE YOUNGER — THE KING'S VETOES — PROCLAMATION OF THE DUKE OF BRUNSWICK — DANTON

In the autumn of 1791, the horizon was black with the clouds of impending war. All Europe was secretly conspiring against the Revolution. In fact, ever since 1789 emperors and kings had threatened the peace of France, her ministers and ambassadors had been rejected by foreign courts while those sent from Coblentz had been accepted. Still there was no specific declaration of war by any foreign prince or state and it was hoped by many in France that war might be averted. France had a controversy with some of the petty German States, but the rest of Europe, in so far as an invasion of their rights was concerned, had no reason to assume towards her a belligerent attitude even though the Revolution was a menace to royalty everywhere. France had not broken the law of nations, her troubles were all internal, her efforts had been confined to the reformation of her own government.

The crowned heads of Europe were anxious to save Louis, but they feared that a declaration of

war on their part would unite all France against the invasion of foreign kings and put Louis's life in peril. It was because of this they delayed decisive action. On the other hand they did not want to forsake and leave him to the fury and the vengeance of the mob.

The emigrant princes at Coblentz were scheming and plotting and every day by their foolish conduct and silly proclamations were imperiling the safety of the king and arousing the indignation of all France. "I can see what they are doing for themselves, but I cannot see what they are doing for us," said Marie Antoinette.

It was the common belief in France that Louis was in correspondence with the emigrants and the Emperor of Austria, and that armies were being organized and equipped to destroy the results of the Revolution and to rehabilitate the ancient *régime*. The camping of hostile troops on the frontiers was taken in proof of this.

"Those marshalled foreigners, shall they
Make laws to reach the Frenchmen's hearth?"

In view of the attitude of Europe and for the honor of France, the Girondins strongly favored a declaration of war. Brissot declared that "a people who after ten centuries of slavery have reconquered liberty, have need of war. War is necessary to consolidate liberty and to purge the Constitution from all taint of despotism. You have the power of chastising the rebels and intimidating the world; have the courage to do so. The *emigrés* persist in their rebellion; the sover-

eigns persist in supporting them. Can we hesitate to attack them? If you would, at one blow, destroy Coblentz, the chief of the nation would then be compelled to reign according to the Constitution, with us and through us." Again he declared: "If the peace lasts for six months it will strengthen a despotic sceptre in the hands of Louis XVI or a usurper's sceptre in the hands of the Duke of Orleans. War alone can give us a republic." Such utterances, coming from the leader of the Girondins, awakened a response in every patriotic heart.

The Girondins sought war from selfish as well as from lofty and patriotic motives. They believed it would increase their popularity and influence as a party, and that it would, besides, add to the glory of France and be the means of carrying liberty by French victories to the oppressed of all nations; for in their enthusiasm they announced that the mission of a republic was the emancipation of all mankind from tyranny.

Robespierre persistently opposed a declaration of war, which was urged as he declared by the Girondins, intriguing ministers, and ambitious generals. He was not in any sense a disciple of Mars. "The dance of the French drums" was not music in his ears. He contended that either victory or defeat might work to the detriment of the Revolution. If the allies were successful all that the Revolution had gained would be lost; if the French armies were victorious they might be used by their leader to set up a military dictatorship.

His speeches were printed in the journals; and the organ of the Jacobins, the "*Orateur du Peuple,*" declared they were masterpieces of eloquence "that should be preserved in every family in order to teach future generations that Robespierre existed for the public good and the preservation of liberty." In the wild excitement of the hour, however, his warnings were not heeded by the people.

For a month he stood almost alone and fought single-handed against his friends, his enemies, and public opinion. He displayed a courage that induced the admiration even of his foes and evinced a spirit of independence that was not only to be admired, but was at times almost heroic.

Madame Roland declared that "he defended his principles with warmth and pertinacity; he had the boldness to stand up singly in their defence and often when the number of the people's champions was vastly reduced."

Marat also strenuously opposed a declaration of war, asserting that military glory only increased the taxes and the burdens of the poor.

The extreme Jacobins and Cordeliers opposed war for no other reason, said the Girondins, than that it would give an opportunity to La Fayette to win fresh laurels.

At last, unable to resist public opinion, Louis reluctantly proposed to the Assembly the declaration of war on the 21st of April, 1792, and the decree was passed at once by a large majority.

In the Assembly, the Girondins decisively carried every motion that favored its prosecution.

The war spirit was rife, and at this time the Girondins were high in public esteem. They outlawed the emigrants and, by special decree, put under accusation Monsieur, the king's brother, who was afterwards Louis XVIII, the Count d'Artois, who subsequently ascended the throne as Charles X, the Prince of Condé, Calonne, the minister of finance during the old *régime,* and Mirabeau the Younger.

Boniface Riquetti, le Vicompte de Mirabeau, was brother of the famous Mirabeau, and was sent by the nobility as a delegate to the States-General in 1789. He defended his order with an energy equal to that with which his brother assailed it. He really was a man of considerable ability, but unfortunately for him, in so far as a display of his talents was concerned, he stood in the shadow of a great name.

He was almost as big as he was tall, and his size, produced by an overindulgence in the pleasures of the table, gave him the nickname of Hogshead or Barrel. The great Mirabeau, in alluding to the Vicompte, declared that " in any other family he would be a good-for-nothing fellow and a genius; in ours he is a worthy man and a blockhead."

He served with some distinction in America, but his devotion to the cause of the colonies did not lessen his loyalty to the king. He emigrated from France in 1790, levied a legion and served, under the Prince of Condé, without obtaining a chance to show his valor.

His death was sudden and tragic. A fellow

officer came to his tent with an order from Condé at a time when he did not wish to be disturbed. The officer, however, insisted upon delivering the order personally, when Mirabeau, growing angry, seized his sword and rushed out upon the intruder; but, in the scuffle that ensued, he himself was slain.

The outlawry and accusation of these royalists met with universal approval. It was intended as a rebuke to the king, who was supposed to be in communication with them and through their instrumentality effecting a union with foreign princes for the invasion of France.

The emigrants hung like a cloud on the borders of the country, menacing and disturbing its peace. They were as foolish at Coblentz as they had been at Versailles, and their threats, instead of intimidating, only angered the people, united them in patriotic fervor, and imperiled the life of the king.

To add to the general mistrust and discontent, the king vetoed two popular measures, one providing for the establishment of a camp of 20,000 men near Paris for the protection of the capital against the foes without and the traitors within; the other for the banishment of priests who persisted in defying the law by refusing to take an oath of allegiance to the Constitution. These vetoes greatly increased the unpopularity of Louis. The favorite cry of the rabble, to show their contempt for the king, was now: "Down with the Veto."

Why, it was asked, should the government not

adopt every means within its power to protect the capital; and if the king could take the oath to support the Constitution, why should not the priests?

Robespierre at this time boldly supported the king's veto in relation to the clericals, in so far as their banishment was concerned, and did it at the risk of destroying his own popularity; in fact, upon one occasion at a meeting of the Jacobins, he argued so earnestly upon the question that he provoked his party colleagues to such a degree that one of the deputies of the Mountain openly and sneeringly advised him to go over to the "Right." Condorcet at one time declared that Robespierre was at heart a priest. The majority of the common people, perhaps, did not altogether understand what the veto meant, but it was enough for them to know that it was an act upon the part of the king that deserved every patriot's disapprobation and censure.

Two countrymen, so the story goes, were talking upon the matter. "Dost thou know," said one of them, "what the veto is?" "No, not I," replied the other. "Well, then, thou hast thy basin full of soup; the king says to thee 'Spill thy soup,' and thou art forced to spill it." Not a very accurate description of the veto, one will say. Though it may have been a royalist story to illustrate the ignorance of the peasant, it answered a purpose from a popular point of view in that it made the conduct of the king appear arbitrary and offensive.

The Church, not only because of the confisca-

tion of its lands, but also on account of the restrictions placed upon the prelates, was now the open and declared enemy of the Revolution. In the country districts, where many of the people were still orthodox, the priests were appealing to the fear and the superstition of the faithful, arousing their hatred and thus threatening civil war, or worse a thousand times than that, a religious war. Constitutional priests were driven from their parishes in several districts, while non-juring priests were assaulted in others. In some localities each church had two pastors and a divided flock.

About the middle of June, 1792, the king dismissed the Girondin ministers — Roland, Servan, and Clavière, and shortly afterwards requested the resignation of Dumouriez. A Feuillant ministry was at once selected and installed.

The 20th of June was the "Day of the Black Breeches," [1] but Robespierre appears not to have taken any active part in instigating the mob to march, nor did he have a hand in bringing the Marseillais to Paris.[2]

In July the Duke of Brunswick issued his insolent proclamation, which aroused not only the fiery indignation, but also the patriotism of the whole nation. The Declaration of Pilnitz, promulgated by the German emperor and the king of Prussia in the summer of 1791, which threatened intervention, was bad enough; but the Proclamation of Brunswick,[3] which had been written by

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 200.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 220.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 227.

the silly courtiers at Coblentz, and to which the duke had merely affixed his signature, set France on fire. In the language of this impudent document, every town, village, and hamlet that should make resistance to the advance of the armies of the allies was doomed to destruction, and if Paris should offer any violence or insult to the members of the royal family, the city was to be given over to fire and sword. The paper breathed forth hate and vengeance in every line.

The king, of course, became more than ever an object of suspicion, for the French princes and nobles were united with the foreign kings in the threatened invasion. The enemies of France were the friends of Louis, and they were advancing to destroy the fruits of the Revolution, to rehabilitate the Bourbon dynasty, to overthrow liberty, and to establish tyranny. If the allies were successful, all that the Revolution had gained would be irretrievably lost.

France, however, instead of cowering under these threats, defiantly accepted the challenge, and her answer to this insolent document of Brunswick was an attack upon the palace of the Tuileries and the deposition of the king.

At this time Danton was the most active man in the Sections, indeed it may be said, he was the most prominent figure, the protagonist, in the great drama of the Revolution. Ever since the death of Mirabeau he had been forging to the front, and he now occupied a position that gave him a far-reaching influence. He was tall and robust in frame and ugly in feature, his face be-

ing pitted with the smallpox and disfigured by wounds inflicted by wild beasts he had encountered in his youth; but he was, withal, of an impressive and a commanding personality. This "Alcibiades of the rabble," plebeian by birth and political inclination, had the tastes of a patrician and in many respects closely resembled the great Mirabeau; he was fond of high living, loved the pleasures of the table, the society of genial companions, and was careless of money; he was not, however, a libertine, but was loyally and devotedly attached to his wife.

The Revolution was an inspiration to Danton; it stimulated his effort. To him it had a purpose; it was the means to the establishment of free and popular government. He was the very opposite of Robespierre. In temperament and personality, no two men could be more dissimilar. Danton was defiant, blatant, unreserved; his intentions were not concealed, he fought in the open. He was not an idealist, a dreamer, but was practical in all his methods and designs. He possessed the real qualities of leadership — boldness, resolution, audacity, generosity, and besides was an orator of great power and had the attributes of a politician and a statesman.

His courage was incomparable. When foreign armies were pressing on the borders of France and even brave men suggested the abandonment of the capital, his voice rang out in trumpet tones above the din, confusion, and cries of despair, defying the approaching hosts, and arousing to action his dismayed and disheartened countrymen.

At first he opposed the war, believing and fearing that it would strengthen politically the faction of the Girondins by greatly adding to their popularity, but at last yielding to public pressure he gave it his most loyal support.

The uprising of the people on the 10th of August [1] dethroned the king; then followed the domiciliary visits [2] and the September massacres.[3] During these exciting events Robespierre stood in the background out of the din and smoke of the conflict. "He hides himself," said Condorcet, "at the approach of danger and does not reappear till the danger is over." In fact, he was charged with having concealed himself in a cellar, while the attack was being made upon the palace of the Tuileries. "He had not the initiative of a man of action," says Morley. "He invented none of the ideas or methods of the Revolution." If these statements be true, it must on the other hand be admitted that he was shrewd and dexterous enough to appropriate the results obtained by the genius and the boldness of others. His natural prudence, or, if you please, his timidity, induced him to avoid taking an active part in effecting those violent measures; but he did not hesitate to accept them afterwards as progressive steps in the Revolution.

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 236.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 261.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 264.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE NATIONAL CONVENTION CONVOKED — THE LEGISLATIVE BODIES OF THE REVOLUTION — THE REPUBLIC PROCLAIMED — JACOBINS AND GIRONDINS — ROBESPIERRE ASSAILED BY LOUVET — ROBESPIERRE REPLIES TO LOUVET — BARÈRE.

The last congress summoned during the Revolution was the National Convention. Its sessions began September 20, 1792, immediately upon the adjournment of the Legislative Assembly, and its dissolution did not take place until October 26, 1795, a year and three months after the death of Robespierre. It witnessed the closing scenes of the " Reign of Terror " and the culmination of that terrific and impassioned struggle.

The States-General, which developed into the National or Constituent Assembly, the Legislative Assembly, and the National Convention were the legislative bodies successively called into existence during the Revolution. Of these three legislative bodies, Robespierre was a deputy to the States-General, a member of the National Assembly, and a delegate to the National Convention.

The States-General met, as we have seen, on the 5th of May, 1789; and the deputies of the Third Estate on the 17th of June, of that same

year, organized the National Assembly, also called the Constituent Assembly from the fact that it drew up the Constitution of 1791.

The delegates to the States-General, it was understood, had been elected to serve for not longer than one year, or at the king's pleasure, but after the organization of the National Assembly the members took an oath not to separate until after they had given a Constitution to France; in consequence it was September 30, 1791, before the body dissolved, its sessions having covered a period of about two years and three months.

The Legislative Assembly convened on the first day of October, 1791. The Constitution had a clause which provided that no alteration should be made in its provisions without a Convention being specially summoned for the purpose. This Congress, accordingly, had to confine its attention solely to the enactment of laws, and hence was called the Legislative Assembly.

In the successive periods covered by these different legislative bodies, may be traced the course, the progress, and the purposes of the Revolution. The National or Constituent Assembly sought to establish a constitutional monarchy, but evinced no desire nor intention to destroy the throne. The Legislative Assembly marked the beginning of the bitter struggle between the two dominant factions for supremacy, and revealed a desire for the founding of a republic. The National Convention continued the factional strife, urged not only the destruction of the throne but the execution of the king, developed an intense revolution-

ary spirit, organized the Great Committee, and inaugurated the "Reign of Terror."

The first important move of the National Convention after opening its sessions on September 20, 1792, was to pass on the 21st a decree abolishing the monarchy and establishing the Republic. It was from this day, September 21, 1792, that the Republic dated its beginning. So royalty was legislated out of existence and France had a government without an executive head.

When the Republic was declared there was no debate as to the abolition of the monarchy; the latter had no champions, and its destruction was accepted as a matter of course. "What need is there for discussion," said a delegate, "where all are of one mind? Courts are the hot-beds of crime, the focus of corruption. The history of kings is the martyrology of nations." What reason is there for a free people, it was asked, to continue a government which in its nature is despotic? To these questions no pertinent answers were made and without ceremony the once proud throne of the Bourbons was toppled over in the dust.

At this time the royal family were confined in the temple; and, that Louis might hear his doom pronounced, it was directed that public proclamation should be made. Accordingly, on the 21st day of September, about four o'clock in the afternoon, Lubin, a municipal officer, attended by horsemen and a great mob, came under the windows of the room occupied by Louis and the queen.

Trumpets were sounded and the multitude commanded to keep silence. Lubin, who had the voice of a stentor, bellowed in his loudest tones the abolition of royalty and the establishment of a republic. During the reading of the proclamation, Louis held a book in his hand and had resolution enough to keep his eyes on the page without evincing the slightest interest in the proceedings; the queen displayed a like indifference. All the while they were rudely stared at by their attendants, among whom was the infamous Hébert, but they passed through the trying ordeal with courage.

Their apparent unconcern, however, was only to conceal their real emotions; it was but smothering the fires that inwardly consumed them. Their proud spirits had to submit tamely to the humiliation of being publicly shorn of honor, dignity, title, power; of being deprived of sceptre, crown, and throne; and of being compelled to witness the destruction of that grand old monarchy they had inherited from their ancestors, and to behold in its stead the establishment of a government of the rabble.

With the convening of the National Convention many of the old leaders of the Constituent Assembly came back to public life, and notable among them was Robespierre.

The Resolution of May 7, 1791, which made the members of the National Assembly ineligible to membership in the succeeding legislature had removed Robespierre for the time being from active and direct participation in parliamentary af-

fairs. During the sessions of the Legislative Assembly, in his many speeches at the Club of the Jacobins, he opposed the measures and policies of the Girondins. It was in this period that he delivered at the meetings of the Jacobins some of the most remarkable and famous speeches of his entire political career; but with the assembling of the National Convention, having been elected as first deputy for Paris, he met his antagonists face to face and on an equal footing.

The Girondins were still in the majority; that is, they were the strongest among the factions in the Convention. The Jacobins and the Girondins were not great political parties, as parties are known in the United States. They did not have national platforms declaring their principles and defining their policies, nor what we call party organization with a chairman or chief executive at the head of a committee on management.

To be sure, the Jacobins had their affiliated societies throughout the kingdom, but these were only clubs or local associations. The time had not arrived for the calling of national conventions, for boss rule, and for the distribution of patronage through party channels; although there was as much scrambling for spoils in those days as in ours.

The Jacobins and the Girondins both were revolutionists and republicans, but the line of demarcation between them, so far as principles were concerned, was quite distinct. The former were more radical in their views than the latter, and more closely represented the common people. The

Jacobins favored a real democracy, while the Girondins were more aristocratic in their tendencies, and would have vested the powers of government in the middle classes.

There were other factions in the Convention that held, when united, the balance of power, and in a contest between the two dominant parties they often decided the day.

Next to a religious conflict in animosity is a political one, and no two factions ever fought with such desperation as the Jacobins and the Girondins. It was literally a war to the death. In many respects, it closely resembled the continuous and terrific struggle for supremacy between the plebeians and the patricians under the ancient republic of Rome, and was equal to it in bitterness.

Madame Roland exerted a great influence in the councils of the Girondins; in fact, she may be classed as one of their leaders; but, lacking in that judgment and discretion so essential in political leadership, she continually involved her friends in all sorts of trouble and in a consequent web of explanations. Her *salons* rang with rumors of conspiracies and dictatorships.

The government was without an individual executive chief; it was not only kingless but headless, and it was not strange, under the circumstances, that ambitious men were suspected of aspiring to absolute power. Cæsarism stalked through the nation like a ghost and constantly disturbed the minds of men. The opportunity

for usurpation made patriots fear its consummation.

Robespierre was charged by his enemies with conspiring to reach a dictatorship, and there is no question that his name was mentioned by some of his partisans in connection with that office; although he may not have instigated such a plot, he said and did nothing to prevent its being carried out.

Marat, it is related, called on him at his lodgings to satisfy his mind on the all-important question. The interview between the dirty, squalid creature from the slums and the neat, fastidious man from Arras makes a picture that an artist might find an interesting subject for his canvas.

Marat found him poring over the pages of Rousseau. The doctor was not impressed with the qualities of the little lawyer for a position so important, and, doubtless, came away more convinced than ever that he himself was the only man in France fitted for the place.

The partisans of Robespierre whispered into the ear of Barbaroux, a leading Girondin, an outline of their purpose; but the sturdy patriot would have nothing to do with such a plan, and declared emphatically that he wanted neither dictator nor king, although if he were driven to a choice he would prefer the latter.

The rumors were beginning to injure the reputation of Robespierre, and the Girondins lost no opportunity to increase the public suspicions. The Jacobins were alert, however, and to throw their

pursuers off the scent they made a counter charge that Brissot had an itching desire for the place.

On the 10th of October, 1792, Rebecqui, one of the Girondin deputies from Marseilles, charged Robespierre openly in the Convention with aspiring to a dictatorship. Barbaroux supported Rebecqui, and declared that when he came to Paris just before the 10th of August several friends of Robespierre had suggested to him the selection of Robespierre as dictator. Barbaroux named Panis, a deputy, as one of the men interested in the matter. "Is it possible," said Panis in answer to the charge, "that Barbaroux, whom I love, can believe I ever meant such a thing?" But Barbaroux stood his ground and insisted that there could have been no misunderstanding in relation to the proposition that had been made to him. "Who besides yourself," said Panis, "can witness that I ever made such a proposal?" "I can," cried out Rebecqui, "for I heard you."

Robespierre was greatly disconcerted and his friends and party were silenced. An effort was made by some of his supporters to turn the attention of the Convention to what they claimed were matters of more importance to the Republic than mere accusations, founded upon rumors, against individual members, and at last, after skilful management, an adjournment was secured.

On November 3rd, Roland read a report in the Convention to which was attached a letter from a member of the Paris Commune who demanded the death of the Girondins and a dictatorship for Robespierre. This came like a thunderbolt from

a clear sky, and the quarrel between the factions was at once renewed. The Convention was thrown into an uproar; the members of the "Right" assailed Robespierre and hurled at him every epithet in the vocabulary of abuse. He was a villain, a traitor, a usurper. When he ascended the tribune the tumult was so great that his feeble voice could not be heard. After comparative quiet had been restored, however, he began to speak; but his remarks were incoherent and as usual he could not refrain from descanting on his own virtues as a patriot. The chamber again grew impatient, and demanded that he speak to the point. At last, summoning all his strength and courage, he cried out: "You calumniate a zealous patriot, but who is there in your midst that will dare to accuse me to my face?" "I," said Louvet, standing directly in front of the tribune and looking Robespierre steadily in the eye. Louvet was about to ascend the tribune when Danton, observing the discomfiture of Robespierre, called out to him: "Continue, my friend, there are many good citizens here to listen." But Robespierre's courage failed him and, livid with fear and rage, he shrank to one side to make room for Louvet, who at once ascended the tribune. Danton proposed an adjournment, but Louvet would not give way, being determined to be heard.

Louvet was a young man about twenty-nine years of age, "of small stature, feminine form, delicate features, light hair, blue eyes, a pale complexion, and a massive brow." Madame Roland

in a sketch of him says: "He is ill looking little, short-sighted and slovenly, but with dignity of brow and the fire that animates his eyes with the expression of any great truth. It is impossible to have more wit, less affectation and more simplicity. Courageous as a lion, simple as a child, of great sensibility, a good citizen, a vigorous writer, he in the tribune can make Catiline tremble; he can dine with the Graces and sup with Bachaumont."

His face, of a melancholy cast, was marked not only with traces of sorrow but with the impress of resolution. "He was one of those men," says a distinguished French historian, "whose political destiny endures for a day; but this day acquires them fame, for it attaches to their name the remembrance of sublime talent and sublime courage."

His speech at this time was one of the most remarkable ever heard in the Convention. Cool, dauntless, resolute, he stood in the tribune waiting for silence, and before beginning cast a look of defiance in the direction of the Mountain. His speech was punctuated with the phrase: "I accuse you, Robespierre." His accusations formed an indictment in which Robespierre was charged with calumniating patriots; with having debased and proscribed the representatives of the nation; with having sought personal idolatry; with having permitted himself in his presence to be styled the only virtuous man in France who could save the people; and with having endeavored to obtain supreme power. Time and again

the orator pointed his finger at Robespierre, who winced under the attack and could hardly restrain his anger.

When Louvet descended from the tribune, the hall rang with applause. His friends received him with open arms. His speech was admired as much for the courage it displayed as for its eloquence.

Robespierre, having so signally failed in the early part of the day's session to command the attention of the house, thought it better to secure time in which to prepare his answer. Besides, his enemies were impatient; they would not hear him, and some even demanded his immediate accusation and arraignment.

When November 5th arrived, the day fixed for Robespierre to reply, he was prepared to meet the occasion. He had in the interim written an elaborate speech and had taken the precaution of filling the galleries with his retainers. "You accuse me," he said, "of aspiring to tyranny, but in order to attain it, means are necessary, and where are my treasures and my armies?"

He answered *seriatim* the personal accusations, defended the Jacobins, and declared that the 2nd of September was but the sequel to the 10th of August. He asserted emphatically that he never had a thought to subvert the Republic, and of course as usual proclaimed his loyalty and virtue.

There was so much outward pretension in Robespierre that it was not surprising that men grew tired of his continual moralizing and became disgusted in listening to his self-proclaimed

integrity. The man who is always boasting of his honor is like the woman who asserts her virtue. Their protestations are apt to create suspicions. Robespierre's friends and supporters, too, upon every occasion prated of his incorruptibility and pointed to him as the one honest man in the Republic.

When the countryman voted to ostracise Aristides, it was not because of any political reason, but for the simple fact that he had grown tired of hearing one man in Athens everlastingly referred to as "The Just." To signalize one individual in a community with such a designation seems to be a reflection on all the other citizens.

After Robespierre concluded his speech, Louvet and Barbaroux attempted to continue the discussion, but Barère made a motion to postpone indefinitely further consideration of the question. "Citizens," he said, "if there existed in the Republic a man born with the genius of Cæsar and the boldness of Cromwell — such a man might be feared. But men of a day, paltry dabblers in commotion, who will never enter the field of history, are not made to occupy the precious time which we owe to the nation." He then proposed the order of the day, which was meant to show the contempt of the Convention for any further consideration of the question. His motion was carried.

That evening at the Jacobins', Robespierre was received in triumph, and about a week later Louvet, Barbaroux, and Rebecqui were expelled from the club. Barère was called to account for hav-

BARÈRE

From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.

ing alluded to the contestants as "paltry dabblers in politics," but with his usual skill he parried the attack by declaring that he referred only to the opponents of Robespierre.

Bertrand Barère, who by his motion had brought the dispute suddenly to an end, was, says Scott, "a sort of Belial in the Convention, the meanest, yet not the least able, amongst those fallen spirits, who with great adroitness and ingenuity as well as wit and eloquence caught opportunities as they arose, and was eminently dexterous in being always strong upon the strongest and safe upon the safest side." Insincere and without principle, he made it a point to reflect always the views of the majority.

He was of fine address, oily in speech, and plausible in manner, while his real purposes at times were hard to fathom.

"Smooth runs the water where the brook is deep."

A keen, clever politician, all things to all men, he was skilful enough so to trim his sails as to avoid the dangerous currents of the Revolution. Stephens says that his reports as a member of the Committee of General Safety on the campaigns directed by Carnot inspired at the front the greatest enthusiasm, and in a certain engagement the French soldiers charged the enemy shouting: *"Barère a la Tribune."* These reports were not only unique in character, but in many instances were very eloquent, and this class of oratory subsequently found its highest development in the proclamations of Napoleon.

Barère's celebrated epigram: *"Il n'ya que les morts qui ne reviennent pas"*—"It is only the dead who never return," which it was alleged was used by him as an argument in favor of the guillotine, is shown to have had an entirely different application. In so poetic and tender a vein did he allude to the executions, that he was called the "Anacreon of the guillotine."

The story is told that he was in the habit of saying to a woman whom he visited: "Well! to-morrow we shall get rid of twenty or thirty of them," and when she expressed her horror, he would laughingly add: "We must grease the wheels of the Revolution." This story, however, may not be true, as it does not harmonize with that related above.

Among the distinguished men of his day few have been more vilified. Macaulay paints his character in the darkest shades and his essay on Barère is one of the finest pieces of vituperation in the whole range of English literature. It seems strange, however, that the great essayist devoted so lengthy an article merely to the abuse of a man whom he considered so mean and detestable.

"Ocean into tempest wrought
To waft a feather or to drown a fly."

CHAPTER XIX

TRIAL OF THE KING — HIS EXECUTION — TREASON OF DUMOURIEZ — LASOURCE ATTACKS DANTON — DUMOURIEZ — GIRONDINS — MARAT ACCUSED — HALL OF THE CONVENTION.

The Republic had a dethroned king on its hands and some disposition had to be made of him, for his presence was a menace to the new government. To hold him as a captive would arouse the sympathy of the world; against treatment so cruel every throne in Europe would protest, and Louis would become the nucleus around which would gather all the opposition to the Republic.

The temper of the people was wrought up to frenzy by the frantic appeals of the demagogues who clamored for the king's death, mobs paraded through the streets shouting: "To the guillotine with Louis the Last," and every citizen who did not favor the execution was denounced by the radicals as a royalist.

All sorts of reasons were given for and against his execution. "I am opposed to the shedding of human blood," said a certain deputy, "but the blood of a king is not the blood of a man." Another deputy declared: "While the tyrant breathes liberty suffocates;" and still another:

"The only way to get rid of tyranny is to strangle it."

On the other hand, "the indulgents," as they were called, argued that it was "foolish for the Republic to behead a man whom Rome would canonize as a saint"; that "it would be wise to let Louis live that he might wander as a ghost among thrones"; and that "to make a Charles I was to make a Cromwell." "Condemn Louis to learn a trade," cried one of the moderates, "that the world may see a dethroned king earn his living." These reasons were considered by the red republicans as only flimsy excuses to save the life of the king.

Robespierre declared unreservedly that the execution of Louis was a political necessity. "You have not to pass sentence for or against a single man," he said addressing the Convention; "but you have to take a resolution on a question of the public safety and to decide a question of national foresight. A dethroned king in the bosom of a revolution, which is anything but cemented by laws, a king whose name suffices to draw the scourge of war on the agitated nation — neither prison nor exile can render his existence immaterial to the public welfare. It is with regret I pronounce the fatal truth. Louis ought to perish rather than a hundred thousand virtuous citizens. Louis must die that the country may live."

In November, the iron chest, which Louis had made with the assistance of Gamain the locksmith, was found in a wall of the palace.

Roland carried it to his office, examined the contents, and the secret was out that the king had been in correspondence with the allies and was conspiring with the emigrants.

The Jacobins charged Roland with having suppressed the letters found in the box which implicated several of the leading Girondins in the court intrigues; and in proof of this, Bozé, a royalist, publicly stated that Vergniaud, Gensonné, and Guadet had written to the king before the 10th of August, 1792, promising to render him all the assistance in their power to save the monarchy. In addition to this it was rumored that Guadet had once made a midnight visit to Louis in the Tuileries; that, after the interview was over, the queen had with her own hands lighted a candle and taken Guadet into the bedroom of the dauphin to show him the little fellow fast asleep; and that Guadet, with tears in his eyes, had kissed the boy's forehead.

The Jacobins, as keen politicians, took every advantage of the condition of affairs and used the stories in circulation to weaken the influence and the popularity of their opponents.

Christmas, in the year of our Lord 1792, was anything but a merry season in the royal household, for the 26th day of December had been fixed for the opening of the trial of Louis.[1]

In many of its features, the trial was a farce, a travesty on justice; it was neither solemn nor impressive; force, intimidation, and fear effected his conviction. The proceedings in the Con-

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 334.

vention were noisy and riotous; instead of a court, it seemed to be a cavern of furies, or an amphitheatre filled with wild beasts, into which had been thrown a victim to be torn to pieces. Howling mobs of men and women, drunk with wine and vengeance, invaded the galleries and the lobbies of the hall and demanded the king's death. No matter how grievous may have been the charges that were preferred against Louis, the method of his conviction was a crime.

His doom was sealed by the cowardice of the Girondins, who, against their real convictions and as a matter of self-preservation and political necessity, voted for his execution. By this conduct they brought upon themselves the contempt of their enemies and lost much of their popularity in the provinces. Many of them first voted to submit the matter to the sanction of the people, and yet, when the ballot was taken on the final and all-important question, these same men voted for the king's death. Conduct so inconsistent required explanation. The political party that apologizes for its action abdicates its power.

While the trial was in progress, Robespierre received information that Madame Campan had in her possession some papers and a number of letters consigned to her care by the king. In the attempt made by Robespierre to verify this information, Madame Campan got a hint of his purpose and without delay destroyed every trace of the documents. Some royal seals that had been entrusted to her custody she threw forthwith into the Seine.

The execution of the king [1] was the signal for a general war; it aroused all Europe, and the armies were at once put in motion.

Dumouriez [2] won a victory at Jemappes and straightway began conspiring against the revolutionary government, but the defeat of a portion of his main army under Miranda and his own overthrow at Neerwinden on March 18, 1793, shattered his hopes.

In the beginning of April, 1793, when the treasonable designs of Dumouriez had been laid bare and when the Assembly had sent out commissioners to arrest him, Lasource, a Girondin, thought it wise, in order to throw off the suspicion that shadowed his own party, to question Danton as to his connections with the traitorous general. It was mean and hypocritical conduct and received in the sequel the rebuke it deserved.

Lasource was an accomplished orator, and his insinuations spoken in a cool, cutting tone stung Danton to the quick. The charges, too, were a surprise coming from so unexpected a source; besides they were absolutely without any foundation, and Danton could hardly retain his seat during the attack. His lip curled with scorn, his cheeks flushed, and his eyes flashed fire, while the chamber listened and watched with breathless interest. The Girondins, little appreciating the mistake that was being made, smiled at his discomfiture, and the Mountain waited anxiously for the result. When Lasource ceased speaking

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 343.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

Danton "descended from the Mountain like a lava flood," mounted the tribune at a leap, and in a torrent of invective poured forth his wrath. Never was he more defiant in his attitude, more terrible in his anger, and more impressive in his eloquence. "The wretches," he cried, "they would throw their crimes on us. You were right, friends of the Mountain, and I was wrong; there is no peace possible with these men. Let it be war! They will not save the Republic with us, it shall be saved without them; saved in spite of them. I move onwards to the Republic, let us march together; we shall see whether we or our foul detractors first attain the goal."

When Danton came down from the tribune he was received with open arms by the Mountain, Robespierre and Marat leading in the greeting.

Danton at first, as we have seen, opposed war, but finding it inevitable he gave it his most earnest and loyal support, and it was mainly through his influence that Dumouriez was named the successor of La Fayette. The early successes of Dumouriez induced Danton to believe that he was the right man in the right place. Therefore when Dumouriez proved himself a traitor, Danton, having been so closely identified with the general, was suspected of treason in many quarters, and for a time lost much of his popularity. But in fact there was no reason in the world to doubt his integrity and his loyalty to the Republic. The Girondins, too, fell under suspicion because Dumouriez had been classed as one of their faction; but, when they endeavored to save them-

selves at the expense of Danton, their purpose was so transparent that the attack recoiled on themselves and they never recovered from the blow.

When Dumouriez found his plans were discovered, he hurried into the camp of the Austrians, and offered his services against his country. The traitor was welcomed but despised, and shortly afterwards he threw up his commission and found an asylum in Amsterdam.

Dumouriez was not only a soldier, but quite a clever politician. While in Paris he played his game very adroitly and was a great favorite not only with the Girondins but also with the Jacobins. Before he set out for his campaign in Belgium, Collot d'Herbois in his enthusiasm, and perhaps as a further inducement to victory, told him that if he captured Brussels he would give him permission to kiss Madame d'Herbois, who at that time was sojourning in that city. The general, however, when he entered in triumph the Flemish capital, was so ungallant as not to avail himself of the privilege.

Dumouriez had a ready wit. At the time it was rumored that he meditated a dictatorship, Camus, a deputy, addressing him said: "If thou dost intend to play the part of Cæsar, remember I will be Brutus and plunge a poniard into thy bosom." "My dear Camus," replied Dumouriez smiling, "I am no more like Cæsar than thou art like Brutus, and an assurance that I should live till thou kill me would be equal to a brevet of immortality."

The Girondins, who had clamored for the war, had to bear the blame for its reverses. They were responsible, too, for England's joining the coalition. Pitt did all in his power to avoid embarking upon the war, but the opening of the Scheldt [1] by a decree of the Convention, a thing right in the abstract but most imprudent from a political point of view, so provoked the English people that Pitt had at last to yield to public opinion. This was but the beginning of a quarter of a century of carnage. England furnished subsidies to the allies, and covered the seas with her fleets, and was the most formidable enemy by all odds that France had in the coalition.

The Girondins favored the war, hoping thereby to strengthen their faction, but how much better it would have been had Robespierre's advice been taken; better not only for France but for all Europe, if by so doing a generation of warfare could have been avoided.

Feeling their power waning in the capital, the Girondin orators continually in their speeches appealed to the provinces for protection, and even went so far as to threaten the destruction of Paris if the deputies of the Gironde were molested. This was bold language, calculated to arouse the anger of the Parisians, for there is nothing so sensitive as the sentiment of a large city in relation to its importance. Especially may this be said of Paris, whose citizens, according to Mercier, believed the universe was seated on the banks of the Seine. "Paris," exclaimed

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 316.

Danton in one of his impassioned speeches, "is the natural and constituted centre of free France. It is the centre of light. When Paris shall perish there will no longer be a republic."

The Girondins were not well organized, they were divided among themselves into cliques, and they made so many political blunders that a number of their members grew lukewarm in their allegiance. They were losing ground daily, for a defeated party is like an army on the retreat, it has its deserters. They seemed at this time to have no intelligent management nor direction. They acted as if bewildered; they struck out right and left, but there was no force in their blows, and the only thing they accomplished was to increase the number and the bitterness of their enemies. In the language of a French historian: "They had created the Republic without wishing it and governed it without comprehending it."

In the Convention they were continually moving for the appointment of a committee to investigate the September massacres. This was directly aimed at the Jacobins, but more especially at Danton. Without being able to accomplish anything in this direction they only further aroused the enmity of the radicals.

Danton always had a lurking admiration for the Girondins; he believed they were honest and patriotic in their motives. Instead of cultivating the friendship of a leader so powerful, however, they time and again denounced and humiliated him. They disregarded his advice, and

spurned his every offer of assistance. Dumouriez, who was a far-seeing politician, told them they were making a grievous mistake; but, blind to their own danger, they paid no attention to his warnings.

Among all their enemies, however, none pursued them more relentlessly than Robespierre, and he did more than any one man to effect their overthrow and expulsion from the Convention.

Marat, too, had been unremitting in his attacks upon them, and at last they determined to retaliate. He had been preaching anarchistic doctrines, had even gone so far as to tell the mob that if they were hungry the baker and butcher shops were close at hand and that a man was a fool to starve in the sight of food. The *canaille* acted upon the suggestion of their leader, and bread and meat shops in all quarters of the city were plundered and sacked.

On account of the violence induced by teachings so lawless, the Girondins instituted proceedings against Marat, and he was summoned to appear before the tribunal.

On April 22, 1793, he came to the bar with an army of hoodlums at his back. The purlieus of Paris furnished the cohorts, and it seemed as if the lower regions had sent forth a legion of foul spirits to defend the cause of an archangel of darkness. This body of retainers, vociferous and loyal, soon induced the court, which was friendly to the prisoner, to make short work of the case. The accused was acquitted without delay and was then borne in triumph on the

shoulders of the mob through the streets of the city, the rabble all the while dancing to their own wild music the intoxicating "*Carmagnole.*"

Marat ought to have been sent to jail; there was every reason for his prosecution and punishment, but the Girondins should have known that it was impossible to secure a conviction under the circumstances before such a court.

It was about this time the Convention changed its quarters. When the Assembly moved to Paris from Versailles, in 1789, it occupied the Ménage, a building that had formerly been used as a riding-school by the nobility. It was a large structure, and was hastily fitted up for the purpose of accommodating the legislature. David, the artist of the Revolution, applied his skill in improving the appearance of the hall and in providing conveniences. At a later period, the walls were covered with the notices that were posted throughout the city at the time of the return of Louis from Varennes: "Whoever cheers him will be beaten: whoever insults him will be hanged"; "Hats on the head, he is going to pass before his judges"; "He has hung fire; it is the nation's turn to shoot now." It was in this vast dim and dingy hall that the king was arraigned and tried.

The new home of the Convention was in the palace of the Tuileries. The royal family had been dispossessed of the palace on the 10th of August, 1792, but it was not until the 10th of May, 1793, that the Convention began holding its sessions in this historic building. This

was a more pretentious habitation for the Assembly than the Ménage, and was called the palace of the nation. The hall where the delegates assembled had been used formerly for theatrical entertainments, and was reached by a grand staircase leading from the garden.

It does seem to be more than a mere coincidence that the halls occupied by the National Assembly should have been a tennis court at Versailles, and a riding academy and afterwards a theatre in Paris, places that had been exclusively devoted to the amusements of royalty and the nobility. The Revolution was full of strange and stern contrasts.

At the entrance of the hall, soldiers, designated the grenadiers of the Convention, were continually on guard. The hall itself in which the Convention met was a large room, capable of holding comfortably 2,000 people, but in times of excitement and insurrection twice that many crowded within its walls.

The seats for the delegates were arranged, as in the Ménage, in the form of an amphitheatre. On one of the long sides of the room were nineteen semicircular benches rising one behind the other without tables or desks. If a deputy wished to write, his knee was called into requisition as a support for his paper. The members sat, as a rule, with their hats on. The president occupied a large armchair on a platform located midway between the two ends of the horseshoe formed by the amphitheatre. On his table were a big bronze bell and a large brass or copper inkstand.

The bar of the Convention was on the right hand of the president; it was here that the accused were arraigned.

When a member wished to address the body, he obtained permission from the chair, and then ascended the tribune or rostrum, which was located near or in front of the platform of the presiding officer. He did not speak "in place," as is the custom in the American Congress and the English Parliament. The tribune from which the orators addressed the Assembly was reached by nine steps that were "high, steep, and difficult to mount." Gensonné, the Girondin, in hastily going up the steps one day, stumbled and in an impatient manner exclaimed: "They are scaffold stairs." "Serve your apprenticeship then," cried out Carrier, amidst the shouts and laughter of the galleries and the Mountain. After ascending the tribune, the speakers addressed their colleagues, not the chair; votes were taken "*par assis et levé*," that is, the deputies in voting for or against a motion rose from or retained their seats. There was one exception to this method, and that was at the trial of Louis XVI. In this important case the "*appel nominal*" was adopted, when every deputy had to ascend the tribune and give his vote aloud, together with his reasons if he had any to present. The names of the delegates were called in the alphabetical order of the departments.

There were ten compartments on each of the long sides of the wall above the amphitheatre of seats, and directly under the ceiling, called trib-

unes or galleries, which were for the use of the people. Here, during the later days of the Revolution, gathered red-capped Jacobins and wild menads from the markets, who shouted their applause and threats. The upper row of seats occupied by the deputies was so close to these tribunes that the spectators could converse with their representatives. At the ends of the room were large boxes on a line with the galleries; seats in these were set apart for invited, distinguished, or privileged guests.

The hall at all times was gloomy, even dismal in appearance; light from the outside came through small windows, and at the night sessions under the dim glare of the lamps it was almost impossible to distinguish the delegates one from another across the chamber. There were a number of pedestals bearing large candelabra, each with eight lamps, but they cast a ghastly light and were altogether insufficient for the illumination of the hall.

On one of the walls, in a black wooden frame, was a placard nine feet high representing an open book, on the two pages of which was the "Declaration of the Rights of Man." At a later period, on the opposite wall in corresponding form, was placed the Constitution of the Year II of the Republic. The walls were also adorned with Roman *fasces*. Gigantic statues of ancient philosophers and law-givers, among them Lycurgus, Solon, and Plato, occupied conspicuous situations. There was also a large, impressive figure of Liberty. In front of the tribune was a

bust of Lepelletier Saint Fargeau, the deputy who had been assassinated in the Palais Royal by the life-guardsman Paris, for having voted for the death of the king.

This was the hall of the Convention. A playhouse where once royalty had watched and applauded the tragic scenes of the mimic drama now was a theatre where in reality were enacted the bloody and thrilling events in one of the greatest tragedies that ever marked the world's history.

CHAPTER XX

ROBESPIERRE'S REPLY TO VERGNIAUD — GIRONDINS EXPELLED FROM THE CONVENTION — MARAT'S ASSASSINATION — TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF CHARLOTTE CORDAY — FESTIVAL OF AUGUST THE TENTH — THE GREAT COMMITTEE.

The debates in the Convention grew hotter every day. The clashings between the two leading factions in the struggle for political supremacy kept the house in a constant turmoil, to the exclusion of matters in which the real welfare of the people was concerned.

As the disasters in the field accumulated and the internal troubles increased, Paris, instead of showing a spirit of submission, only intensified its revolutionary fury. In the face of impending danger the Jacobins in the Convention urged the most extreme measures. They proposed a forced contribution from the rich to defray the expenses of the government, and even favored the seizure of the carriages of the wealthy to convey the soldiers to the seat of war, and the confiscation of their horses to drag the artillery and to carry the troopers into battle. It was claimed that in time of peril everything belonged to the Republic. If

the poor gave their lives, why should not the rich donate their possessions?

Against these communistic doctrines the Girondins protested; they had favored the declaration of war, but they now strongly opposed the methods urged by the Jacobins for its prosecution. The clubs rang nightly with denunciation of the members of the Gironde, and the mob, at one time to the number of 80,000, gathered during the sessions of the Convention outside of the hall and clamored for their accusation.

On May 31, 1793, while Robespierre was in the tribune, Vergniaud interrupted him and asked leave to address the Convention. Robespierre, who was arguing upon the question of army reorganization, had just said in the course of his remarks: "No! We must purge the army. We must —" and then hesitated. Vergniaud, who was anxious to ascend the tribune, impatiently exclaimed: "Conclude then." "Yes," shrieked Robespierre, "I am going to conclude, and against you, who after the Revolution of the 10th of August would fain have sent to the scaffold its authors — against you who would have saved the tyrant — against you who have conspired with Dumouriez — against you who have pursued with bitterness the same patriots whose heads Dumouriez demanded — against you whose criminal vengeance has provoked the same cries of indignation which you make a charge upon your victim! Well, then, my conclusion is a decree of accusation against all those denounced by the petitioners."

This arraignment, which has the quality of real eloquence, resulted in the undoing of the Girondins, for twenty-one of their number were arrested on June 2, 1793, and expelled from the Convention. It is this date that marks the beginning of the period known as the "Reign of Terror."

There was no intention at this time to do more than to humiliate the Girondins; their execution was not even contemplated. They were allowed to go and come without interference; in fact, they all could have returned to their provinces had they so desired. They were simply not permitted to take part in the deliberations of the Convention nor to attend its sessions. "*Ce parti tomba,*" says Lamartine, "*de faiblesse et d' indecision, comme le roi qu 'il avait remversé.*"— "This party fell from feebleness and indecision, as did the king whom it had overthrown."

Deprived of their rights as national representatives, they chafed under this restriction and the drawing-rooms of the Roland mansion resounded with their wrath and eloquent denunciations.

The provinces favorable to the Girondins flamed up, and at this point, any temporizing policy upon the part of the Convention would have thrown the country into the horrors of a civil war. Envoys were sent out into the disaffected districts and the rebellious were taught that any uprising against the Convention would be deemed treason against the Republic, and dealt with accordingly.

Charlotte Corday, believing that Marat was

responsible for all the ills that had befallen the Girondins, determined to avenge in her own way, their wrongs. She came to Paris, obtained an audience with Marat, and stabbed the wretch in his tub. His cry for help brought to his side his housekeeper and a young man who, in an adjoining room, had been folding newspapers. The latter knocked Charlotte down with a chair and stood over her until the *gendarmes* arrived. The news rang through the streets like an alarm of fire; a great crowd soon gathered, and it was with difficulty that the officers saved Charlotte from being torn to pieces. Through all the excitement she bore herself with a calm dignity and faced with resolution and intrepidity the wild mob that surged about her.

Charlotte's story is a romance. She was a gentle, modest woman and had the honor of being the granddaughter of the great dramatist Pierre Corneille. She had a mind of strong convictions and sincerely believed that in striking down Marat she was serving the real interests of her country; but alas! "her poniard only opened anew the veins of France."

She stood her trial with composure, accepted her doom with heroic fortitude, and faced death without a tremor. She went to the scaffold robed in a scarlet smock. After the guillotine had done its work, the executioner lifted up the severed head, showed it to the people, and then "struck the cheek insultingly," for which inhuman act the authorities sent him to gaol.

Her martyrdom was a foolish and useless sac-

rifice, for her act doomed her friends to destruction. "She has ruined us," said Vergniaud, "but she has taught us how to die."

The death of Marat removed from the stirring scenes of the Revolution one of its most vehement partisans. Made bitter by persecution, he had grown unreasonable, abusive, and violent in his opposition to all those persons and factions that he considered were enemies to the Revolution; his policy was to suspect those who assumed, secured, or strove for power, and his constant cry of warning to the people was, "*Nous sommes traish*"—"We are betrayed."

Many prominent leaders of the radicals, doubtless, experienced a quiet satisfaction when the doctor was laid away, for he had become so ferocious in temper and so suspicious of even his friends that no one felt safe from his attacks.

Robespierre especially had watched with a jealous eye the growing popularity of Marat, and although he expressed a profound grief at his sudden death he could have had no real heartfelt regrets.

At the Jacobins', when memorial services were held and when it was proposed to bury Marat with a pompous funeral, Robespierre declared that instead of paying fulsome laudation to the dead the way to avenge his loss was to bring destruction to his enemies. This was a covert accusation of the Girondins. "If I speak this day," said Robespierre, "it is because I have a right to do so. You talk of daggers — they are waiting for me, I have merited them, and it is

but the effect of chance that Marat has been struck down before me. I have a right, therefore, to interfere in the discussion and I do so to express my astonishment that your energy should here waste itself in empty declamation and that you should think of nothing but vain pomp. The best way of avenging Marat is to prosecute his enemies without mercy. The vengeance which seeks to satisfy itself by empty honor is soon appeased, and never thinks of employing itself in a more real and more useful manner. Desist then from useless discussion, and avenge Marat in a manner more worthy of him."

The Convention, notwithstanding the suggestions made by Robespierre at the Jacobins', decreed that special honors should be shown the martyr, and in consequence the funeral of Marat [1] was one of the most impressive ever witnessed in Paris. Everything was done to excite the sympathies of the people. The corpse was exposed to public view and the ceremonies lasted from six o'clock in the evening until midnight. Greater honor could not have been accorded a dead Cæsar.

A year had gone by since the attack upon the Tuileries and in order to arouse the enthusiasm of the country it was decided to observe with appropriate ceremonies the anniversary of the 10th of August. Deputies were sent to Paris from all the primary assemblies to take part in the event and to accept the Constitution in the name of all France.

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 95.

The reception given to the provincial envoys was cordial and generous in the extreme. They were warned by public proclamation "to beware of those men who, covered with the mask of patriotism, would attempt to seduce them with fair words, while at heart they desired to tear the country to pieces; to beware of the rich, who have at all times abhorred virtue and poisoned morals, and of those perverse women, seductive by their charms, who would lead them into vice." They were advised "to avoid the *ci-devant* Palais Royal, where these perfidious persons congregate. That famous garden was once the cradle of the Revolution, once the asylum of the friends of liberty, but now is the filthy drain of society, the haunt of villains, the den of all the conspirators." They were told to visit the faubourgs, where they would meet men active, simple and virtuous like themselves. Whether or not the unsophisticated countrymen visiting the gay capital followed this wholesome counsel, may only be conjectured.

During their stay in Paris, the Jacobins extended to them the freedom of their hall and invited them to take part in the discussions. The society, which, as a rule, met every second day, resolved to hold daily sessions in order to give full opportunity to consider the questions affecting the welfare of the whole country.

A public reconciliation of the departments with Paris took place at the hall of the electors on the 7th of August, and afterwards the envoys visited the Convention in a body. Speeches were

made — fervid, eloquent, and patriotic. Wrought up by the enthusiasm of the occasion, the members left their seats and threw themselves into the arms of the visitors, indulging in what was called a fraternal embrace. At last the envoys marched out of the hall singing:

> "*La Montagne nous a sauvés;*
> *En congédiant Gensonné —*
> *Au diable les Brissots,*
> *Les Vergniauds, les Buzots;*
> *Dansons la Carmagnole.*" [1]

The envoys prepared an address assuring the departments that Paris had been calumniated by the enemies of the republic; that the *Marais* [2] or Marsh, no longer existed, but that the Mountain would soon pour forth its fire upon all the royalists and the partisans of tyranny.

When the paper was read at the Jacobins', it created the wildest excitement; a crowd of speakers rushed to the tribune, but they at once fell back when it was announced that Robespierre desired to address the meeting. His appearance in the tribune was the signal for applause. Many of the envoys up to this time had never seen or heard him and he was listened to with the closest attention.

So wild and tumultuous had the meeting grown that it was feared by the wisest heads

[1] "The Mountain has saved us
In dismissing Gensonné —
To the devil with the Brissots,
The Vergniauds, the Buzots;
Let us dance the Carmagnole."

[2] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 286.

that a mere suggestion might be enough to start the crowd upon the commission of some desperate deed before the night was over.

Robespierre, sharing in this fear, cautioned all the people present against committing any act of violence that might be taken advantage of by the enemies of the republic to injure its friends. He counseled moderation and warned them to beware of all the snares set by the foes of the Revolution. "Be calm, be firm," he said; "look the calamities of the country in the face without fear, and labor to save it." His wise words calmed the rising tumult, and after showering congratulations upon the orator, the meeting quietly dispersed. During the remainder of the sojourn of the envoys, Paris was quiet and orderly.

The celebration of the 10th of August began with the dawn. Salvos of artillery, military reviews, eloquent addresses, fraternal greetings, processions of envoys and deputies, continued until sunset. While these ceremonies were taking place the allies were within a few days' march of the capital, but the threatening dangers seemed to unite all hearts and to increase the patriotic fervor.

After the expulsion of the Girondins from the Convention every effort was put forth by the Jacobins to save the Revolution.

The allied armies, elated with their successes, were pressing on all the frontiers, making preparations for a grand advance and promising to reach Paris in a fortnight. The emigrants were

boasting of returning to their possessions and threatened with dire vengeance all those who had compelled them to leave France. The Vendean peasants, still loyal to the crown and the Church, were rising in rebellion and, incited by the preaching of the priests, were beginning a crusade against the Revolution under the banner of the cross; other provinces were fretful, and several large cities were exhibiting a spirit of rebellion.

The gloomy news that came to the capital from all quarters was enough to dishearten the bravest; but strong and energetic men seized the reins of government, inaugurated a reign of terror, and menaced with death all those who favored a reaction. The Jacobins, no longer harassed in the Convention by the Girondins, instead of wasting their time in declaration, factional opposition, and political controversy, now devised schemes and projects for the vigorous prosecution of the war.

The Revolution had gone so far and had received such an impetus that it could not halt without putting in jeopardy all it had secured or accomplished; to reveal the slightest spirit of submission meant its destruction; a reaction would be but a return to old conditions; there could be no compromise; the overthrow of the republic would result not only in the restoration of the monarchy but in the rehabilitation of the ancient *régime.* There was no common ground upon which the Revolution and its enemies could meet. It was a war to the death.

Denounce as we may the methods of the Revolution, we can but admire the courage and the resolution of France in this supreme hour of her trial. No nation ever put forth more stupendous efforts to meet a crisis; her courage was sublime as she faced, single-handed, combined Europe. England, Austria, Prussia, Holland, Spain, Portugal, the Two Sicilies, the Roman States, Sardinia and Piedmont were in the coalition, and while these foes assailed her from without, and civil war and all imaginable horrors raged within, she rose in her strength with a spirit invincible to allay her troubles at home and grapple with her enemies abroad.

Livy relates that when Hannibal was outside of the walls of Rome and defiantly hurled his spear into the city, threatening its destruction, the Romans in utter contempt of his threats and to manifest their confidence in the final outcome, sold at public auction in the Forum the land upon which the army of Hannibal was encamped. The same bold and desperate spirit displayed by the Romans in the face of impending disaster, animated the Parisians when foreign hosts threatened the destruction of the capital.

Paris was possessed by an intensified but a subdued excitement; every face wore an expression of defiance and determination. "The people," writes Hugo, "lived in public; they ate from tables spread in front of their doors; the women sat on church steps making lint and singing the Marseillaise; . . . there were smiths' shops in full blast at every crossing, making

guns under the eyes of the passers-by. . . . Nobody seemed to have time enough; everybody was in haste, not a hat without a cockade. Busts of Franklin, Rousseau, Brutus, and Marat were everywhere. On every wall were placards — large, small, white, yellow, green, red, printed and written with the exclamation: 'Long live the Republic.'"

Everywhere was revealed the spirit of enthusiasm and everything bore the features of the Revolution. Even the statues of saints and kings, left over from the monarchy, that adorned the *façades* of the churches and the public buildings, wore the Phrygian cap.

The Convention ordered a levy of three hundred thousand men and imposed a forced loan of one thousand millions.

The whole nation became a military camp, and every Frenchman able to bear arms was liable to be mustered into the ranks as a soldier.

At this time the Committee of Public Safety, known as the Great Committee, was exercising extraordinary power and working with a resolution born of desperation. It was organized April 6, 1793, and consisted of nine members, which number was increased to twelve in the summer of that year.

The committee held its sessions in a room of the Tuileries. To reach this council chamber, one had to pass through a long corridor dimly lighted by oil lamps. The room was still furnished with the clocks, the ornaments, the mirrors, and the tapestries which royalty left behind when the

king suddenly abandoned the palace on the 10th of August, 1792.

A long table covered with a green cloth stood in the centre of the room, around which table the members sat while transacting their business or deliberating upon public affairs. The sessions were held in secret. The committee was tireless in its energy; the members met in the morning at eight o'clock and worked until one; they then attended the Convention until four. In the evening they again assembled and continued their labors far into the night; often the morning dawned before they separated.

The committee was the head and the body of the government, all the other departments were but its limbs. It was a popular despotism established in a crisis to save the State; its tyranny was the price of liberty. "It has been said that terror is the mainspring of despotic government," declared Robespierre. "Does yours then resemble despotism? Yes, as the sword that flashes in the hands of the heroes of liberty resembles that with which the satellites of tyranny are armed. The government of the Revolution is the despotism of freedom against tyranny."

The committee was accountable to no one; it exercised every function of government. Its word was law and woe to the man who provoked its enmity, defied its commands, or fell under its suspicion.

It was organized to meet extraordinary conditions, and not only did it repel invasion and suppress civil war, but under its direction the

Convention passed decrees providing internal regulations and improvements. The law of the Maximum, which fixed the price beyond which wheat, flour, meat, and staple articles should not be sold, was enacted; strikes were prohibited; counterfeiters of assignats were punished; speculation was checked; the Stock Exchange was closed; land grants were made to wounded soldiers; poor laws were adopted; the Normal School, the Conservatory of Arts, the Museum of Natural History, and the Polytechnic School were created; a method of compulsory education was introduced; slavery in the colonies was abolished; and the decimal system of weights and measures was fixed by statute. All these were valuable and timely measures.

One of the most important results of the French Revolution was the welding together of the districts and provinces of France that had been antagonistic to each other. In order to effect this union, laws were made uniform, restrictions removed, local privileges abolished, and a national sentiment created. To bring the people more closely together the Committee of Public Safety next decided to unite them in the use of a common tongue.

The French language for centuries had been broken into many dialects, local patois abounded in the peasant districts, and in some departments even foreign tongues were spoken. To meet these conditions a report was drawn up by Barère, under instructions from the committee, and submitted to the Convention. This remarkable and

interesting paper, eloquent in expression and revealing in every line the pride and arrogance resulting from a newly acquired freedom, read in part as follows:

"We have revolutionized the government, the laws, the usages, manners, dress, commerce, and even thought itself. Let us also revolutionize the language which is the medium of our daily intercourse.

"The committee suggests as an urgent and a revolutionary measure that there should be sent into each designated commune an instructor in the French language, whose duty shall be to teach the youth of both sexes and to read at each decade to all the other citizens of the commune the laws, the decrees, and the instructions sent by the Convention. Rome instructed her youth in the reading of the laws of the Twelve Tables. France will teach her citizens the French language in the reading of the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

"While foreign peoples everywhere on the globe study the French tongue, while our newspapers circulate in all regions, while the '*Journal Universal*' and the '*Journal des Hommes Libres*' are read in the homes of all nations from pole to pole, shall it be said that in France six hundred thousand Frenchmen are absolutely ignorant of the language of their native land and know neither the laws nor the purposes of the Revolution?

"Our enemies have made of the French tongue the polite language of the courts; they have de-

based it. It is for us to make it the language of the people that it may be honored.

"It is a duty we owe to the republic to have the language in which is written the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the only language spoken in the territory of France."

This report of the Great Committee having been submitted to the Convention, it was decreed that an instructor of the French language should be named in each commune in the departments of Morbihan, of Finisterre, of the Cotes du Nord, and in the Lower Loire, where the inhabitants spoke an idiom called *Bas Breton;* also in the departments of the Upper and the Lower Rhine, in the department of Corsica, in the department of Moselle, in the department of the North, of Mont Terrible, of the Maritime Alps and of the Lower Pyrenees, in which the inhabitants spoke a foreign tongue.

The popular societies were urged to aid in the establishment of clubs for the oral translation of the decrees and of the laws of the republic, and in every way possible to multiply the means of making known the French language even in the most remote sections of the country.

The Committee of Public Safety was authorized to adopt every means that it believed necessary to carry this decree into effect.

The power of the Great Committee reached out in every direction; there was nothing too small for it to consider, nothing too great for it to attempt, and the whole country felt the force and influence of its authority.

CHAPTER XXI

EXECUTION OF MARIE ANTOINETTE — TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF THE GIRONDINS — EXECUTION OF MADAME ROLAND.

In October, 1793, Marie Antoinette was guillotined; her death was a happy deliverance from her troubles and humiliations. No one can sound the depth of agony through which her soul had passed. Her beauty gone, grown old and gray before her time, almost blind, wan in feature and emaciated in figure, she sat in sackcloth and ashes and drank to the dregs the bitter cup of sorrow.

One who saw her in the last days of her imprisonment gives the following sad description of her appearance: "She was seated on a low stool mending a petticoat of coarse black serge. Her garments were ragged, her shoes were worn, across her breast was pinned a white kerchief. She stooped like an old woman, her face was deathly pale, and we could see that under her cap her hair was as white as snow."

By her extravagance and imprudent conduct she had centred upon herself the hatred of the people. All the mistakes that Louis had made were attributed to her councils. Barère, in his Memoirs, declares: "The sway she gained over

the king rendered her despotic and her influence in public affairs was fatal."

She paid, however, the full penalty for all her errors; her worst and most unforgiving enemy ought not to have wished it heavier, and when everything is taken into consideration, all her sins did not merit a punishment so severe. Even the austere St. Just, in commenting upon her, said: "She was deceived rather than deceiving, thoughtless rather than guilty; entirely devoted to pleasure, she seemed not to reign in France but at Trianon."

On her way to the scaffold she was jeered and howled at by the women from the slums; old hags followed the cart and ridiculed her, but she was apparently oblivious to all insult and derision and went to execution with that composure that marks the conduct of one tired of life. To no person was death ever more welcome.

The Girondins soon followed in her wake. It was expected that they would make an eloquent and a heroic defence when arraigned at the bar of the Revolutionary Tribunal, for among them were some of the greatest orators and some of the ablest lawyers in France. It was thought that Vergniaud would thunder against his accusers, confound the witnesses, and with his overpowering eloquence perhaps move to mercy even the stony hearts of his inexorable judges. But from the very start the accused knew they were doomed, and they bowed their heads to the inevitable. The trial lasted for a week, the proceedings were noisy and tumultuous, and con-

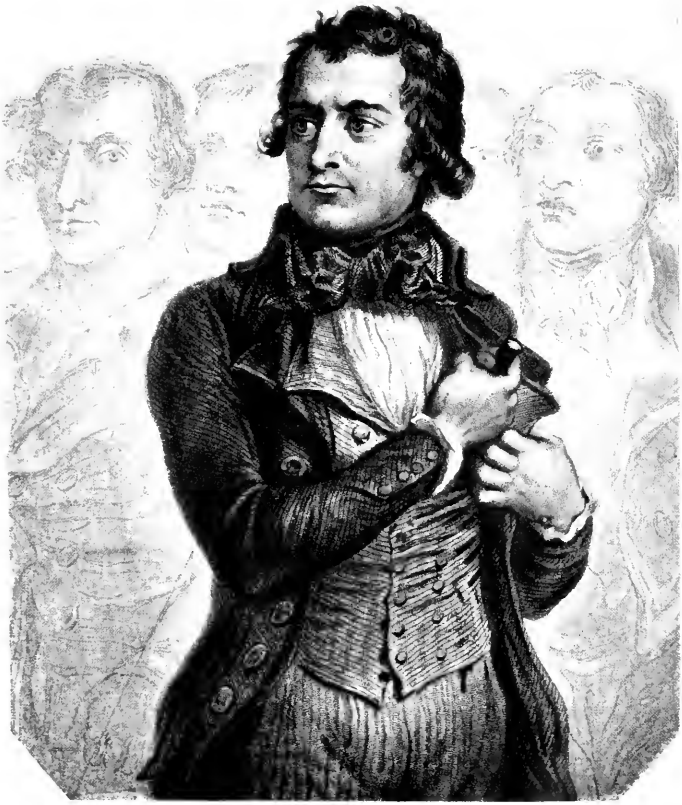
ducted without any regard for judicial decorum, dignity, or fairness.

Fouquier Tinville, the public prosecutor,[1] disregarding every principle of decency and fair play, plagued the prisoners with insolent questions and irritated them beyond endurance by the introduction of false and irrelevant testimony. This creature who was dead to every sentiment of justice cannot better be described than by the words in which Macaulay pictured that brutal barrister of the Old Bailey, George Jeffreys, afterwards Lord Chancellor of England. "Impudence and ferocity sat upon his brow, while all tenderness for the feelings of others, all self-respect, all sense of the becoming were obliterated from his mind. He had a forehead of brass and a tongue of venom."

With a prejudicial court and a relentless prosecutor, the Girondins had no opportunity to set up a legal and an orderly defence. Immediately upon the rendition of the verdict, Valazé drew a dirk from his pocket and stabbed himself to the heart, falling dead in the midst of his companions. This act, however, did not cheat the guillotine of its victim, for the inexorable tribunal directed that the corpse should be decapitated; and, on the day set apart for the execution of the Girondins, the body was carried in a tumbril to the scaffold and beheaded. The Revolution like a vampire was sucking the blood even of the dead.

After the conviction of the Girondins, their

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 410.



VALAZÉ

From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.
After a painting by Raffet

friends made every effort to save them, but without avail. Garat, minister of the Interior, besought Robespierre to exert his influence in their behalf; but in answer to the entreaties of the minister, Robespierre impatiently replied: "Do not speak of it again. I cannot save them. There are periods in revolutions when to live is a crime and when men must know how to surrender their heads when demanded. And mine also will perhaps be required of me. You shall see if I dispute it."

The Girondins went to execution with fortitude after the manner of the ancient heroes of whom they were always prating. Taking them all in all, they were actuated by the highest and the purest motives in their desire to effect the establishment of an ideal government; but "they might as well have attempted to found the capital on a bottomless and quaking marsh as their pretended republic in a country like France."

Marat had pursued them relentlessly, and his ceaseless attacks in the columns of his paper had destroyed their popularity. His death, since they were charged with having instigated it, brought upon them the hatred of the mob who eagerly clamored for their execution.

After Marat's assassination Robespierre fought them bitterly and he never ceased his opposition for a moment until he brought them to the scaffold. His real vindictiveness was never so displayed as in this instance. "All those deputies of the Gironde," said he, "those Brissots, those Louvets, those Barbaroux are counter-revolu-

tionists, conspirators." He hated them because they stood for the wealthy middle classes, and he believed that they favored a return to the monarchy. "Who are our enemies?" he asked, and then answered his own question: "The vicious and wealthy." Again he said: "Our internal perils arise from the middle class; to overcome that class we must rally the people. Everything was prepared for subjecting the people to the yoke of the middle class; that class has triumphed at Marseilles, at Bordeaux, at Lyons; it would have triumphed at Paris but for the present insurrection. This insurrection must continue, the people must ally themselves with the Convention, and the Convention must make use of the people. The insurrection must spread gradually on the same plan, the lower classes must be paid to remain in the cities, they must be furnished with arms, enraged, enlightened." This was government with the mob supreme. Robespierre saw in the middle class that spirit of conservatism that was antagonistic to the principles of the Revolution, a conservatism with an aristocratic tendency that favored a return to old conditions. This was why he so strenuously opposed the Girondins.

The truth was they were ardent republicans and believed firmly in popular government; they advocated not an aristocracy of wealth, but of intellect. "To this devoted band of men, whose whole career was justice and virtue," writes Belloc, "no one has dared to be contemptuous, and history on every side has left them heroes.

They were own brothers to the immortal group that framed the American Constitution, and worthy to defend and at last to give their lives for the republican idea. They hated the shedding of blood; they tested every action by the purest standard of their creed, and from the first speeches in which they demanded war, to the day when they sang the Marseillaise on the scaffold, they did not swerve an inch from the path which they had set before themselves."

As much as we may admire the lofty purposes of the Girondins, we must on the other hand pity and condemn them for their insensate course and foolish policies. They seemed, at times, to possess no practical wisdom and no political foresight. They had taken a hand in the attack upon the Tuileries, they had urged the destruction of the throne and the establishment of the republic; but, as was natural with men of their fine sensibilities, they turned away with aversion from the cruelty of the September Massacres. Foolishly they wasted their time in the Convention by moving investigations and by indulging in personal recriminations. Timidly and against their better judgment, they voted for the king's death and thus lost the respect that only valor commands.

Feeling that the Revolution was getting beyond them, they endeavored to check it by creating a reactionary sentiment; but their conduct was that of men bewildered by events and overwhelmed by the consequences of their own acts.

Instead of uniting their forces in an effort to

establish a strong government and repel invasion, they became mere partisans and fought for factional supremacy. They menaced their enemies with vengeance and the scaffold when they were without power to enforce their threats.

As we have heretofore seen, they bitterly assailed Robespierre and foolishly insulted and humiliated Danton, whom they could have secured as a friend; by a useless and fruitless prosecution, they made Marat an implacable enemy and incurred the hatred of the mob. They arrayed the provinces against the capital and threatened it with destruction. They aroused an insurrectionary spirit in Caen, Bordeaux, Marseilles, and Lyons, and this they did within sound of the foot-beat of advancing foreign hosts.

They are to blame, indirectly at least, for many of the evils that befell France. They had, as we have already seen, fomented the war, opened the Scheldt,[1] and forced England into the coalition. Failing to carry the war to a successful issue and being responsible for its disasters, they had to give way to stronger and more energetic men who, to save the country from destruction and to secure the results of the Revolution, inaugurated the "Reign of Terror."

Taking advantage of the dissensions between the factions, La Vendée rose in rebellion, and it was not until the insurgent forces of Paris drove the Girondins out of the Convention that the Jacobin government was enabled to weld the nation together, subdue the insurrections in the

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 316.

provinces, and by an effort that seemed almost superhuman, repulse the foreign invaders.

Madame Roland[1] could not escape the fate of her friends, and she was soon brought before the Tribunal. She bore herself with composure and great dignity in the presence of the court. She spoke with earnestness and spurned with indignation certain charges and insinuations. The audience at this period were permitted to take part in the proceedings and often bandied words with the judges as well as with the witnesses and prisoners. Time and again during the progress of her trial, Madame Roland was interrupted and often silenced by the galleries, but through all the ordeal she displayed a remarkable coolness and self-possession. It is stated that when condemned she rose and, bowing to the judges, said: "I thank you for considering me worthy to share the fate of the good and great men whom you have already sacrificed."

In the early days of her imprisonment, before her trial, she grew despondent, but she soon became reconciled to her situation, and as time ran on her spirits revived and she resolved to accept stoically whatever fate had in store for her. She had known and encouraged Robespierre in his early career and she was induced to believe that a personal request to him might save her life. The Revolution that they both had so ardently embraced had carried one to the summit of power, the other to the depths of despair.

After having written a letter, which under

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 178.

an appearance of pride only half concealed a cry for mercy, she could not make up her mind to send it, for it would have placed her under obligations to one who had persecuted her friends to the death, and who had shattered all her idols. She impulsively tore it up, as she had impulsively written it, but she subsequently gathered the pieces and they were found among her papers after her death. The haughty spirit could not bend and ask mercy from one whose generosity, had he granted her request, could never have been repaid with real gratitude.

The letter, however, would have made no impression upon Robespierre; he was too closely identified with the Revolution to save any of its victims. No recollection of past favors, no ties of former friendship, could have induced him to run the risk of forfeiting his popularity.

Madame Roland, at one time during her imprisonment, decided to anticipate her fate and for this purpose obtained a dose of poison. She wrote tender and sympathetic letters to her husband and daughter, asking them to forgive her for disposing of a life she had consecrated to them; but upon second thought she threw the potion away and destroyed the letters.

As the day of execution approached, she displayed the greatest courage. She had played a strong hand in the game of the Revolution and had lost, and she bravely paid forfeit with her head. "She mounted the scaffold like a queen ascending the throne." A more picturesque dis-

play of heroic fortitude was never witnessed in the world's most tragic scenes.

One of the characteristic features of the French Revolution was the nonchalant manner in which the victims of its vengeance met their doom. The condemned went to execution with such an abandon that death was seemingly stripped of its horrors. It was either with an air of bravado or with a spirit of resignation that most men and women mounted the scaffold. If they had fought and shrieked and struggled against their doom as did Madame Du Barry when she was carted through the streets, the prisoners would have revealed the horrors of death and made the scenes attendant upon the executions more terrible, and perhaps a sentiment might have been created against permitting the repetition of public spectacles so shocking and heart-rending.

CHAPTER XXII

DANTON GROWS WEARY OF SLAUGHTER — ROBESPIERRE REBUKES CAMILLE — ROBESPIERRE DEFENDS DANTON — COUTHON — ST. JUST.

King and queen were beheaded, the monarchy was destroyed, the nobility had fled, the aristocrats and suspected persons were silenced, exiled or massacred, the Girondins were executed; surely it was time to cease the slaughter and to restore order. The country had been sufficiently cleared for the establishment of a stable government. The republic had been founded, and now the time and the opportunity were at hand to unite all factions and interests in order to strengthen its foundations. But the Revolution was yet insatiable, the tumbrils were rolling on their way almost hourly to the scaffold. The Mountain was supreme; it towered far above the Plain; that terrible Mountain out of which belched fire and down the sides of which ran blood.

Danton believed it was time that this wholesale slaughter should cease, and exclaimed: "Let us leave something to the guillotine of opinion." He had been much affected by the execution of the Girondins; he looked upon their death as

nothing less than political assassination and he declared that if this sanguinary spirit was to be kept alive it would result in a war of extermination among the factions. "Do you not know," he said, "at the pace we are going there will speedily be no safety for any person? The best patriots are being confounded heedlessly with traitors. Blood shed by generals on the field of battle does not spare them from spilling the rest on the scaffold."

Strange that, if in his opinion this slaughter was to continue, he did not provide for his own and his party's safety. His energy seemed to leave him, he dallied away his time at his old home, Arcis-sur-Aube, and appeared to be indifferent to the events taking place in the capital. His friends endeavored to arouse him out of his stupor. His change of mind and conduct was taken by his enemies as an indication of treason. For a man who had been so energetic in his leadership and so pronounced in his views, suddenly to become supine and apparently indifferent, would naturally create suspicion. A revolutionist could not stop in those days; he had to keep up in the march or be looked upon as a deserter.

Desmoulins, influenced by the stand that Danton had taken, began a series of very ably written articles in his journal calling for a reaction, for the restoration of peace. He never wrote with greater force, and his appeals for clemency were reaching the hearts of the people. Robespierre, who saw in these articles an anti-

revolutionary sentiment, called Desmoulins to account and even suggested the burning of his paper. "To burn is not to answer," said Camille. "Do you then presume to justify writings that form the favorite reading of the aristocracy?" asked Robespierre. "Listen, Camille, were you other than you are, so much favor and indulgence as you have experienced would not be shown you." "You condemn me here," replied Camille, "but in your own house your sentiments were differently expressed." "You showed me only portions of what you had written," rejoined Robespierre. The interview was warm, but the men parted apparently as friends.

Lacretelle declares that Danton went into retirement at the instance of Robespierre, who advised him to withdraw from public view for a time, for the reason that a tempest was brewing, and that the Jacobins had not forgotten his relations with Dumouriez; that they did not like his manners, his voluptuous and lazy habits, which were at variance with their energy. "Withdraw for a season," said Robespierre; "trust to a friend who will watch over your dangers and warn you of the first moment to return." It hardly seems possible that Danton acted on this advice when he sought rest and seclusion in his old home at Arcis-sur-Aube, for it must be borne in mind that he was enjoying the delights of a honeymoon at the time.

Danton, when he declared for peace and clemency, did so because he thought that violence should cease when the danger was over; he be-

GEORGES COUTHON

From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.
After a painting by Ducreux

lieved in terror only as a means to effect an end, and thought that when the purpose was accomplished the terror should cease.

During his absence his enemies had been at work putting into circulation all sorts of stories about his fabulous wealth, and upon his return he boldly faced his accusers in the Convention. Mounting the tribune he challenged them to bring forward their charges. "Am I no longer the same man who was at your side in every critical moment? Am I no longer the man whom you have so often embraced as your friend and with whom you swore to die in the same dangers? Have I then lost those features which characterize the face of a free man? You will be surprised, when I make you acquainted with my private conduct, to see that the prodigious fortune which my enemies claim I have amassed dwindles down to the very small portion of property which I have always possessed. I defy malice to furnish any proof against me."

At the conclusion of Danton's speech, Robespierre hurried to the tribune and exclaimed: "If Danton demands an investigation into his conduct and thinks it will be serviceable to him, I for one do not object to comply with his request. If he wishes the crimes with which he is charged specified, I shall enumerate them. Danton, thou art accused of having emigrated, of having gone to Switzerland laden with the spoils of thy corruption, with having fled in dismay from the people's wrath. It has been alleged that thou wert at the head of a conspiracy to enthrone Louis

XVII with the understanding that thou wert to act as regent.

"Knowest thou not that the more courage and patriotism a man possesses the more intent are the enemies of the public weal upon his destruction?" Then, turning to the Convention, he said: "I may be mistaken in Danton, but I have seen him in his family; he deserves nothing but praise. In his political relations I have watched him; he was slow, I admit, to suspect Dumouriez, he did not hate Brissot and his accomplices cordially enough, but if he did not always agree with me, am I to conclude that he betrayed the country? No, I always saw him serve it with zeal. Danton wishes to be tried. He is right; let me be tried too, and if any one has anything to allege against Danton let him come forward."

No one answered this challenge, and amidst great applause Danton was given the fraternal embrace.

Robespierre could well afford to take this stand; it was apparently kindly conduct upon his part, but he well knew that the popularity of Danton was all but extinct; no one now feared his power; the giant had slumbered while his enemies toiled; they had bound him with cords and had shorn him of his strength.

The manly conduct of Robespierre in coming to the assistance of Danton called forth much praise.

During this period the confidential friends and advisers of Robespierre were Couthon and St.

Just; so closely identified were these three men in their interests that they formed a party by themselves, and were called "the triumvirate." From the very beginning of their alliance they never wavered in their allegiance to each other, and no changes in the fortunes of Robespierre ever moderated the loyalty and devotion of these stalwart friends.

Georges Couthon was in full and active practice as a lawyer when the Revolution began. His family was of the well-to-do middle class.

In 1783, his lower limbs were stricken with paralysis, but that terrible affliction did not in the least degree diminish his energy. He is said to have been a person of an engaging aspect and a noble presence. "His countenance bespoke gentleness but his devilish creed of terror steeled him against mercy."

He was sent as a deputy to the Legislative Assembly, and soon became an influential member of that body. He was a speaker of much force, and he took part not only in the debates of the Convention, but also at the Club of the Jacobins. Attaching himself to Robespierre he became a member of the Committee of Public Safety. Sent with several other deputies to Lyons to quell the insurrection in that rebellious city, it was soon brought to subjection by the application of drastic measures; and when its destruction was decreed, he had himself carried to the public square and with great solemnity ordered the work of demolition to begin. Armed with a hammer he struck the first blow on the doomed

buildings, and repeated in each instance the words: "I condemn thee in the name of the law."

As the Revolution progressed, his radicalism increased. He demanded the impeachment of all the kings of the earth, denounced Pitt as an enemy of the human race, and the English nation as a traitor to humanity.

He possessed a sort of grim humor, for upon one occasion, towards the close of his career, when the air was filled with all sorts of rumors in relation to dictatorships, he was charged by an irate orator with aspiring to mount the throne. "Mount the throne," he shouted, "how can I mount anything with these legs?"

Antoine Louis Léon Florette de St. Just was, taking his youth into consideration, a most extraordinary man.

He was born August 25, 1767, at Décize. His father had been an officer in the cavalry and for bravery on the field had been made a member of the royal and military order of St. Louis; but notwithstanding his aristocratic associations St. Just became from the very start a most pronounced and rabid revolutionist. *"Il exécrait la noblesse,"* says Barère, *"autant qu'il aimait le peuple."*—"He execrated the nobility as much as he loved the people."

He was educated in the College of the Oratorians at Soissons, from which institution he was graduated with honor, being distinguished for high scholarship. Adopting the law as his profession, he suddenly abandoned his prepara-

tory studies and returned to his mother's home with the intention of devoting himself to a literary career. He stole the family jewels and fled to Paris, where he was arrested and imprisoned for six months. His defence was that he had as much right to this property as his mother.

After his release from prison he published a poem entitled "*Organt*"; it is worthless as a literary production, being a mere imitation of Voltaire's "*La Pucelle.*"

In 1792 he was sent from the province of Nivernais as a deputy to the Convention. He made an impression on that body at once and took a conspicuous part in its deliberations.

A work which he had written, entitled "*Esprit de la Revolution et de la Constitution de France,*" had attracted considerable attention throughout the kingdom, so that when he came to Paris he was not unknown. Barras relates, in his Memoirs, that the first edition was sold out in a few days after its publication, and that it made for its author a great reputation as a far-seeing statesman.

Sent by the Convention on a mission to reorganize the army of the Rhine, he inspired the defeated troops with fresh courage, disciplined a number of the officers, removed one general in disgrace, had another shot, sent the president of the Revolutionary Tribunal of Strasbourg to the scaffold, and levied a tax of 10,000,000 francs on the wealthy citizens of that town to feed the starving troops that were defending them. He even went so far as to interfere with the plans

of Carnot, and brought down upon his head the censure of that able war minister.

He was of inflexible will, had great self-possession, resolution and courage. He had a cold exterior and was not easily perturbed. Upon one occasion when Robespierre grew angry and impatient over a trivial matter, St. Just chided him and reminded him that "empire belongs only to the phlegmatic."

He was an orator of great force, but not an incessant talker like Robespierre. According to Aulard, he addressed the Convention not more than twenty times during the period of his membership, yet on every occasion his words were of the profoundest importance. He was possessed of remarkable executive and organizing ability.

His personal beauty was striking. Desmoulins described his face as apocalyptic. His features were regular and finely cut. He had large, full, deep blue eyes, which were solemn in expression except when lighted up in the animation of speech. His hair almost reached his shoulders, and was parted in the centre. He dressed with care, wore a blue coat, with a standing collar and two rows of brass buttons, cuffs, frills, and buckled shoes.

In his most sarcastic vein but in a playful mood, Camille, upon one occasion in referring to St. Just, said: "He looks upon his head as the corner stone of the republic and carries it as if it were the holy sacrament." "And I will make him," replied St. Just with a snarl, "carry his like St. Denis," alluding to the legend of that

ST. JUST

From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.

saint having walked from Paris to the grave carrying his head under his arm. This witticism of Camille so wounded the vanity and the self-esteem of St. Just that the latter never forgot nor forgave the insult, and called the account settled only when his victim went to the scaffold.

He took life very seriously and was as sombre and as gloomy as a monk in Lent. Young, handsome, and intelligent, he was lionized while in Strasbourg; but temptations could not induce him to abandon his virtue. Under circumstances that might have seduced even a stronger man, he displayed the spirit of a Scipio.

He was a fanatic, a bigot in his devotion to the Revolution; to him it was a dogma, and no sympathy nor sentiment of mercy could influence him in the pursuit of its enemies. He declared: "The vessel of the Revolution can arrive in port only on a sea reddened with torrents of blood." His declaration that "no one can rule innocently in France" meant, in its strict interpretation, that every excess was justifiable that had for its purpose the advancement of the Revolution.

He was executed in the twenty-sixth year of his age. His was a short life, but a full one.

CHAPTER XXIII

AN IRRELIGIOUS FRENZY — EXECUTION OF THE HÉBERTISTS — ROBESPIERRE MEETS DANTON AT DINNER — EXECUTION OF THE DANTONISTS.

Having abandoned her religion, France seemed to delight in ridiculing the ancient faith. The ceremonies of Christian worship were burlesqued; donkeys and bullocks were robed in priestly garments; a woman was enthroned as the pontiff of atheism. "Beauty without modesty," says Beauregard, "was seen usurping the place of the Holy of Holies." A great crowd, mockingly chanting the *Te Deum* and elevating the host, marched through the streets of Paris amidst jeering and applauding throngs. Men wearing surplices and copes led an immense procession to the bar of the Convention, where they deposited a great quantity of gold and silver which they had found in the churches and which they transported on wheelbarrows. After making burlesque speeches and mockingly addressing apostrophes to the saints, the crowd filed out into the streets dancing the Carmagnole. Several of the deputies hooked arms with the fair *citoyennes* and joined in the orgy. Robespierre watched these sacrilegious proceedings silently but contemptuously.

The churches were sacked and everything holy was defiled. The sacred and historic temple of St. Denis, containing the royal tombs of the monarchs of the Valois and Bourbon houses, was broken open and despoiled. The body of the great Turenne was exposed to the public gaze for hours; even the coffin of Henry IV was taken from its vault, the corpse placed upright on a stone and the remains of him who had once been the idol of the nation were mocked by a ferocious rabble until a drunken woman knocked down the corpse by giving it a blow in the face.

All the vaults were emptied, the bodies thrown into pits, and covered with quicklime. The leaden coffins were carted off to be moulded into bullets.

Hébert had headed this sacrilegious movement; he was the apostle of its teachings, and the columns of his paper indulged in the coarsest ribaldry. This conduct aroused the indignation of Robespierre, and he was most bitter in his denunciation of Hébert and his followers. "There are men," said he, "who upon the pretext of destroying superstition would fain make a sort of religion of atheism itself," and then in the language of Voltaire exclaimed: "*Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrait l'inventer*"—"If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him."

Robespierre was always outspoken in his opposition to atheism; upon one occasion when Duport declared: "I am an atheist," Robespierre looking searchingly at him said: "Atheism is aristocratic. The idea of a great being who

watches over oppressed innocence and punishes triumphant crime is essentially the idea of the people." Whether or not it was this thought that controlled his religious belief it is hard to say, but it is a fact that he did profess a faith in the existence of a great creative and over-ruling power.

"How could I have borne my struggles," he cried out once at the Jacobins', "that were beyond any human strength, if I had not raised my spirit to God."

Hébert not only scoffed at the idea of a Supreme Being, but reviled sacred things, and besides taught doctrines that if applied would have destroyed the whole social fabric.

At the instance and under the advice of Robespierre, Camille Desmoulins had attacked the Hébertists most vigorously. In his characteristic style he had declared: "I will sharpen my pen into a dagger and stab these scoundrels; my ink is more indelible than their blood, it stains for immortality." He denounced them as "a turbulent and an atrocious faction," and described their leader as "a miserable intriguer, a caterer for the guillotine, a traitor paid by Pitt, a thief and a robber who had been expelled from his office of check-taker at a theatre for theft."

The Hébertists were soon condemned and on the 24th of March, 1794, five carts carried them to execution. A fouler crew the Revolution did not spew out into eternity.

With this faction removed, the field was clear for the immolation of the Dantonists.

The partisans of Robespierre, unable to interpret the purpose of Danton, and seeing that his conduct was creating a reactionary movement against the Revolution, urged Robespierre at every turn to surrender to their vengeance his old-time friend. The Great Committee had already marked Danton for destruction, and were waiting for the first opportunity to strike the blow.

Danton had been one of the early colleagues of Robespierre; time and again the great tribune had come to his rescue, and Robespierre should have been grateful. They were, to be sure, so opposite in character and disposition that they never could form a close friendship, such a tie for instance as bound Camille to Danton, or St. Just to Robespierre. Yet, the time was at hand when these two men could have formed a combination that would have secured to them almost unlimited power; the fate of the Republic was in their hands; they had merely to unite their forces. But for some unaccountable reason Danton, his vigor and ambition lost, was groping his way like a blind man. Robespierre, unable to account for the change in Danton's attitude towards the Revolution, had grown suspicious and was watching his rival with the eyes of a lynx.

"Ah! if Danton were an honest man, if he truly were a republican!" exclaimed Robespierre. "What would I not give to have the lantern of the Greek philosopher to see into his head and heart." This seeming distrust of Danton was a

signal of danger. Suspicion was sufficient justification in those days for accusation.

When the friends of Danton besought him to come out of his state of inaction, when they predicted his overthrow and destruction if he did not exert his power, he would laugh at their fears and invite them to go with him to the nearest *café* to eat a pullet and drink a bottle of wine. The whole character of the man seemed to have undergone a change; he was careless, indifferent, supine. By his conduct he imperiled the lives of his friends and the safety of his party.

There had been a time when Danton looked upon Robespierre as a dreamer, an idealist, but not as a man of force; in fact, in his characteristic way he had said that Robespierre was incapable of boiling eggs hard. But the great tribune ought to have known by this time that the little fanatic would stop short at nothing in promoting the progress and consummating the purposes of the Revolution.

There was no trace of the trimmer or the coward in Danton, and he was outspoken in his denunciation of those men who persisted in keeping alive a system of terror when the reason for it no longer remained. There was nothing that the Terrorists so feared as a reaction; it meant for them personal and political destruction and any one who favored a system of moderation or believed that the time had arrived to exercise clemency fell at once under their suspicion. Such a view in the opinion of the rabid revolutionists

was treasonable and evinced a spirit of disloyalty to the Republic.

Some of the partisans of Danton and Robespierre, desiring to avoid the collision that apparently was so imminent, arranged that these two leaders should meet at a dinner. Everything passed off quietly and pleasantly until the repast was over, when Danton, perhaps heated with wine, expressed himself too freely. "We hold between us two the peace or war of the Republic," he said; "I am for peace; I desire concord, but I would not give my head to thirty tyrants."

"Whom do you call tyrants?" asked Robespierre; "there is no other tyranny under the Republic than that of country."

"Some of the committee thirst for my blood," exclaimed Danton.

"Not one of the committee desires your head," replied Robespierre. "Would I be here if I sought your death; would I offer my hand to him whose assassination I meditated?"

"You take," asserted Danton, "the hatred people bear towards you for crimes, you declare all your enemies guilty."

"No," said Robespierre, "and the proof that I do not as you charge is the fact that you still live."

There was a snarl in these words; the little tiger showed his teeth. Robespierre immediately took his departure. That night he met St. Just at his lodgings and they conversed until daylight.

The dinner had resulted in putting Robespierre on his guard. Danton's language had been threatening in its character and Robespierre was right, perhaps, in considering it a challenge. So at last, under the persuasion of Billaud-Varennes, "he yielded to fear and domination the head of Danton."

This encounter at the dinner should have been warning enough to Danton that there was no time to loiter, but he continued to smile at the fears of his friends, and to trifle with fate. While the storm was raging and the lightnings were playing around his head, he seemed foolishly in a spirit of mere bravado to provoke and defy the very elements. "They will not dare," he muttered when told that the committee contemplated his arrest.

He and his friends were soon brought before the tribunal and condemned.[1] "We are found guilty without a hearing," said Danton; "there have been no deliberations, no testimony, no witnesses, but we have lived long enough to slumber on the bosom of glory; now we go to the scaffold. We are sacrificed to the vengeance of a few dastardly brigands; but I drag down Robespierre after me in my fall."

As Danton on his way to execution passed the dwelling of Robespierre, he rose in the cart and called down the curse of heaven upon the head of his enemy.[2]

Judging from the exclamations made by Dan-

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 400.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 418.

ton at his trial, during his imprisonment, and while on his way to execution, he unquestionably believed that he was the victim of Robespierre's hate. Even when on the platform of the scaffold he sang a song the theme of which was that Robespierre who had overthrown him would soon follow in his downfall.

Danton thought that Robespierre could have saved him if he would, and consequently held him responsible; but in truth, Billaud-Varennes, St. Just, and some other enemies of Danton in the Committee of Public Safety were the men who encompassed his death, and who induced Robespierre to join in the accusation.

If any dependence can be placed upon the conduct and the language of Robespierre, he was for a long time very reluctant to acquiesce in the accusation of Danton; but when he did make up his mind to join in the prosecution he pursued relentlessly his old-time colleague. History holds him almost wholly responsible for Danton's overthrow and destruction, but this is going too far; although when the following facts are considered he must be held indirectly to blame for Danton's death.

In the first place, Robespierre could have saved Danton had he used his influence in that direction. Again, when, after the arrest of Danton and his friends, Legendre moved to bring the prisoners before the bar of the Convention, Robespierre cut off the last chance of the Dantonists by defeating the motion. And finally, the remarkable report read by St. Just in the Conven-

tion against the Dantonists, which greatly aided in effecting their condemnation, is said to have been prepared from notes furnished by Robespierre, many particulars of which Robespierre knew to be false. A number of the accusations in St. Just's report were absurd, admittedly so; but some excuse, some shadow of justification had to be made for the overthrow of Danton, whose opposition was threatening the destruction of the Great Committee. Danton was sacrificed not for what he had done, but for fear of what he might do.

Robespierre's conduct in the accusation and condemnation of Danton was bad enough at best, but Barras, in his Memoirs, says: "Robespierre, not content with having seen the victims pass his house, followed them to the place of execution, and the insatiable tiger, made more bloodthirsty by the sight he witnessed, seemed to be licking his jaws and gargling his throat with the blood from the scaffold. He sought to conceal himself amid the masses surrounding the guillotine and wended his way homeward with tottering steps as if he had lost his balance."

Such stories made Robespierre appear as a sanguinary monster, vindictive and pitiless. Yet how is it possible to believe that, with his natural caution, he would have been so foolish as to attend and witness the execution? He could not possibly have hidden his identity in the crowd, so well-known was he as a public man, and his presence would have brought upon him the censure of the entire community.

Barras was an implacable enemy of Robespierre. During the "Reign of Terror" he was one of the men, who, to shift the responsibility for their own crimes, charged Robespierre with the commission of them and placed upon his shoulders the blame for all the excesses of that period.

This surrender by Robespierre of his old-time colleague was the greatest blunder of his political life, for he betrayed the only man who could have stood between him and destruction — the only man who could have been of use in helping him to carry out his projects for a reaction against the "Terror." The man who had saved France from Brunswick would have been only too willing to unite with Robespierre in an effort to save the Republic from further slaughter.

CHAPTER XXIV

WAS ROBESPIERRE THE SCAPEGOAT OF THE REVOLUTION? — ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF COLLOT D'HERBOIS BY L'ADMIRAL — CECILE REGNAULT.

After the death of Danton, Robespierre was looked upon as the head of the Republic. The little squinting lawyer, who came as a deputy from the town of Arras to the States-General, had reached the height of his ambition. He was unquestionably at this hour the leading man in all France; the popular representative, the embodiment of the principles of the Revolution. He was the most influential member of the Convention, the leader of the Jacobins, and the idol of the mob; he dominated the Commune, and had the support of the National Guards. It was only in the Committee of Public Safety that he was not supreme.

Through the changing scenes of the Revolution, he had chosen his way prudently, wisely, most skilfully avoiding all pitfalls, and at last had reached the summit of his power. Without magnetism, actually cold and repellant in manner, with none of those brilliant qualities of mind that attract and enchain the attention of men, and wanting in the attributes of the popular

orator, he forced his way to the front and at last "stood alone on the awful eminence of the Holy Mountain."

To attain so exalted a position in such a period and among a multitude of men, many of them of surpassing greatness, required more than ordinary qualities. It will not do to dismiss him simply as a fanatic without talent or genius.

He had always been positive in the expression of his views, had remained ever inflexible in purpose and consistent in his political conduct. His unbending will awed the spirit of the bravest; he was the only man who ever sent a tremor into the heart of the dauntless Danton.

That he was envious and ambitious for power goes without saying, but that he would have encompassed the death of a political rival for mere personal advancement is not true; and yet Sir Walter Scott declares that to be marked in his tablets for any personal opposition, affront, or even rivalry, was virtually a sentence of death. Statements such as this have made him appear in the eyes of the world as a fiend incarnate, and he has been in consequence held responsible for many crimes he neither committed nor even contemplated.

He is charged with having had a sanguinary disposition, but he asserted time and again that he never favored the shedding of human blood unless it was for the success of the Revolution or the safety of the Republic. In his celebrated speech against granting the king a trial, he declared: "The penalty of death generally is a

crime, and for that reason alone, according to the indestructible principles of nature, it can be justified only in cases when it is necessary for the safety of individuals or the social body." "The theory that he loved judicial murder for its own sake," says Morley, "can only be held by the silliest of royalist or clerical partisans. It is like the theory of the vulgar kind of Protestantism that Mary Tudor or Philip of Spain had a keen delight in shedding blood. Robespierre, like Mary and like Philip, would have been as well pleased if all the world would have come round to his mind without the destruction of a single life."

Napoleon declared that Robespierre was the scapegoat of the Revolution, and every comment made by that great man upon the actors, parties, or events of that period is worthy the greatest respect and consideration. He was close enough to the Revolution actually to witness it, and yet far enough away to have a clear perspective. With his keen perception he could see deeply into the motives and purposes of men and was a close observer of those tumultuous times. When he says that Robespierre was made to bear the faults and crimes of others, it must be taken as more than a mere assertion.

In Robespierre's last speech before the Convention, he complained bitterly that he had been held responsible for everything, and that in consequence his reputation had greatly suffered. "Who am I," he cried, "whom they accuse? A slave of liberty, a living martyr of the Re-

public. The delinquencies of others are pardoned; my zeal is imputed to me as a crime. The victims of their own perversity excused themselves by saying: 'It is Robespierre who desires it — we cannot help ourselves!' The infamous disciples of Hébert once used the same language in an attempt to hold me responsible for their vices. My enemies say to the nobles: 'It is he alone that has proscribed you.' They said to the patriots at the same time: 'He desires to save the nobles.' They told the priests: 'It is he alone that pursues you, it is he alone that destroys religion.' To the persecuted patriots: 'It is he that has ordered it, or desires not to prevent it.' Behold the unhappy condemned. 'Who is the cause of this?' 'Robespierre,' they reply. The crimes of all are thrown at my door. My enemies were particularly anxious to prove that the Revolutionary Tribunal was a tribunal of blood created by me alone." This speech was delivered in the Convention in the hearing of men who knew whether or not the facts were true. It is not reasonable to suppose that under such circumstances he would have drawn wholly upon his imagination.

The 10th of August[1] was Danton's work, as were also the domiciliary visits,[2] and Robespierre can not be held responsible for the September Massacres.[3]

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 238.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 261.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 264.

He displayed at times, as we have seen, a spirit of independence. He opposed the war and was willing to go to any extreme, without, of course, soiling the honor of the Republic, to effect any compromise that would have avoided it, and this stand he took and maintained bravely, even when it threatened his popularity. He sustained the king's veto in the matter of the banishment of nonjuring priests. He favored the abolition of the death penalty in 1791. If that had been decreed, what misery and agony France would have been saved!

On the day of Marat's triumph, when the mob invaded the hall of the Assembly, Robespierre had courage enough to show his disapproval of such an intrusion and even to sneer at the wild assertions of Marat.

For five years from the 5th of May, 1789, the date of the meeting of the States-General, to the day of his death, in July, 1794, he had been an active participant in the Revolution. As a radical member of the Jacobins, and as a deputy in the Constituent Assembly and the National Convention, he became so thoroughly identified with the Revolution that he grew to be a part of it; and holding, as he did towards its close, supreme power, he represented in himself all for which it stood.

English authors and journalists are to be held accountable for much of the abuse that has been heaped upon his name. He was denounced, cartooned, and caricatured in every portion of Great Britain, held up to public condemnation, and

described as a monster, a Moloch. His name was the synonym for terror, and was used as a bugbear with which to frighten naughty or disobedient children; the mere mention of it would make the little ones cower in their cribs. Because of his prominence, he became identified with all the vices, crimes, and excesses of the Revolution. It was Robespierre's committee, Robespierre's government, Robespierre's republic, Robespierre's revolution. In referring to the French troops in one of his proclamations, the Duke of York actually called them Robespierre's soldiers. Foreign newspapers spoke of him ironically as Maximilien I, king of France and Navarre. Victor Hugo says: "The pupils of the military school were termed by the decree of the Convention 'aspirants to the school of Mars,' and by the people 'Robespierre's pages.'"

Many of the events of the Revolution were bad enough, but how must they have appeared after the accounts of them crossed the channel, and when viewed through English minds and prejudices! And in British eyes what form must that man have assumed who was considered responsible for all these crimes?

As the most conspicuous man of the Republic, Robespierre was the object of attack from many opposing political factions, as well as from all the forces in opposition to the Revolution.

For several days, a man named L'Admiral loitered around the passageway of the Committee of Public Safety, hoping to meet Robespierre, having marked him for assassination. Growing

tired of waiting, not having caught even a glimpse of his would-be victim, he decided to turn his attention to Collot d'Herbois.

L'Admiral occupied a room in the house where Collot lodged, and on the night of the 2nd Prairial waylaid Collot, who was returning from a meeting of the Jacobins. At the first pull of the trigger the fire flashed in the pan, but the ball from a second pistol just missed the head of Collot and imbedded itself in the wall. Both men grappled and rolled down the stairs, *gendarmes* arrived, and the assailant was arrested.

Almost contemporaneously with the attack on Collot, a young girl seventeen years of age, named Cecile Regnault, a sempstress by occupation, called at the lodgings of Robespierre and insisted upon seeing him, declaring with emphasis that public men should always be accessible to their constituents. Her manner excited suspicion and she was arrested. She carried a basket on her arm, which when examined was found to contain a couple of knives, entirely too small, however, to have accomplished an assassination. She was taken before the tribunal and, upon being asked why she visited Robespierre, answered: "I wished to see what a tyrant was like." "Why are you a royalist?" "Because I prefer one king to sixty tyrants," was her bold reply. These answers, so treasonable in character, were enough to condemn her and she was at once found guilty.

It was rumored that she was an agent of the English government and that she had appeared

dressed as Charlotte Corday at a *bal masqué* in London, where she had brandished a dagger and exclaimed: "I go to seek Robespierre." Another report was that her lover had been guillotined and she desired to avenge his death. The truth probably was that she sought notoriety and essayed the rôle of Charlotte Corday without intending to commit murder. Her father was a paper hanger in the old city of Paris.

The news that Robespierre's life was in danger created the greatest excitement, and the Jacobins made public rejoicings over his deliverance.

It gave Robespierre a great opportunity to denounce tyrants, to exalt and to martyrize himself, and to indulge in that morbid sentimentality that so characterized him. "I fully expected," he said, "that the defenders of liberty would be a mark for the daggers of tyranny. The crimes of tyrants and the assassin's steel have but rendered us more free and more terrible to the foes of the people. Poniards are sharpened against us and we are to be sacrificed to the vengeance of the enemies of the Republic."

If such an attempt had been made upon the life of Mirabeau or of Danton, he would have laughed at the fiasco; it would have been much better for Robespierre had he treated the matter in the same way. In the end his enemies greatly injured his reputation by making it appear that in his desire for revenge he sacrificed even the innocent.

CHAPTER XXV

IRRELIGIOUS CONDITION OF FRANCE — FESTIVAL OF THE SUPREME BEING.

Robespierre saw a threatening danger to the Republic in the utter disregard for religion that prevailed throughout the country. The nation had become godless.

He felt that every effort should be made to curb the passions and to restrain the excesses of the people. Immorality was destroying the fame and the very fabric of the Republic.

Christianity had been cast out, but as Edgar Quinet wisely observes: "*Une religion ne peut être extirpé que par une autre religion.*" Ethical codes and philosophy are good enough in their way, but the average man requires an accountability to a higher power. This question of religion was a matter that essentially concerned the well-being of the community and also the stability and preservation of the Republic.

To be sure, a woman, chosen more for her beauty than for her virtue, had been enthroned with pomp in the Cathedral of Notre Dame as the Goddess of Reason; but that was a mere pageant, and was in itself a renunciation of religion.

The churches in many localities no longer held

services even for the faithful. Many of the priests, monks, and nuns, had thrown aside their habits, had renounced their vows, and, to show their utter contempt for their past religious obligations, had formed alliances in the face of heaven *"a la* Rousseau." Priests loyal to the Revolution had no influence among the orthodox, and those persons with whom they were friendly had no regard for religion. A footnote in the Memoirs of Mlle. des Echerolles states that the constitutional prelates were designated *"intrus"* or intruders, and bishops in this class wore at the altar, in place of the mitre, the red cap of liberty. What a travesty! the ministers of Christianity clothed in the habiliments of the Revolution, a monster that had ruthlessly despoiled the Church of its power and property.

It was some little time before this period that Gobel, the Archbishop of Paris, had virtually renounced his religion. He had been elected a deputy to the States-General in 1789, and had embraced with ardor the popular cause. He joined the Jacobin Club, and was so radical in his views that he made himself at times appear not only inconsistent but ridiculous in the suggestions he offered and the motions he made. He went even so far as to assume the garb of a *Sans Culotte.* In 1791, he was chosen the constitutional Archbishop of Paris, and was one of the first to worship at the shrine of the Goddess of Reason, after having permitted the ceremonies incident to the installation of that deity to take place in the cathedral of his diocese.

In November, 1793, he appeared in the Convention wearing a red cap. Addressing the body, he said that, having been raised to the archbishopric of Paris at a time when the people wanted bishops, he now resigned his office when his services were no longer needed. As he finished speaking, he laid down his mitre, his crosier, and his ring.

Such an example could but have an unwholesome influence throughout all France. It may not be amiss to state in this connection that Gobel was sentenced to death in 1794, when he embraced his old faith, and on his way to the scaffold read with devotion the prayers of the dying.

The Convention had passed a resolution that all the outward signs of the Christian religion should disappear: there should not be exposed for sale upon the streets or in public places "any kinds of jugglery, such as holy napkins, St. Veronica's handkerchiefs, *Ecce Homos,* crosses, relics, *Agnus Deis,* powders or drugs with so-called miraculous power"; all the Virgins and Madonnas should be removed from the niches at the corners of streets and busts of patriots and martyrs, such as Marat and Lepelletier Saint Fargeau, should be substituted. Even the names of the streets bearing the word Saint were changed; for instance, rue Saint Honoré was to be called simply Honoré.

It was through the instrumentality of the guillotine, instead of the cross, that the regeneration of the world was to be accomplished; to its name

was added the prefix —"Holy." This bloody symbol of the Revolution took the place of the crucifix, and miniature guillotines made of gun metal were worn as ornaments.

The rites and ceremonies of religion were abandoned: infants were not baptized, the burial service was not read, the communion was not administered to the sick, nor were consolation and absolution given to the dying. Children came into the world without a blessing and old age went into eternity without a hope. Sunday as a day of worship was stricken from the calendar, and the steeples rang forth no chimes, for the bells had been melted and cast into cannon.

The abandoned chapels and churches were used for barracks, in some instances even for stables, and instead of the prayers of the priests and the responses of devout worshipers were heard the oaths of troopers, the neighing of horses, the tramping of iron hoofs on the marble pavements, and the clinking of arms. The temples of peace were profaned and devoted to the uses of war.

Over the portals of the graveyards was inscribed the cheerless and hopeless doctrine: "Death is an eternal sleep." With the same appropriateness as at the entrance of Dante's Inferno could have been written the words:

"Lasciàte ogni speranza ch 'entrate ici." [1]

A comedian, to carry impiety to its height,

[1] "Who enters here leaves every hope."

mounted the pulpit in the Church of St. Roche, declared there was no God and then challenged Him to prove His existence by launching His thunderbolts. Inasmuch as the Almighty did not violate a law of nature by immediately crushing this puny Ajax, he argued therefrom the truth of his impious assertion.

The Church was to blame, in a great measure, for this irreligious condition. In the reign of Louis XIV many of the hierarchy were men of fine ability and unblemished morals, and although representing and supporting a system that was intolerant and tyrannical in its character, their dominion was seemingly lighter because of their virtues. Bossuet, Fléchier, Fénelon, Bourdaloue, Mascaron, and Massillon would have adorned their pious and holy calling in any age of the world's history, but this type of great churchmen seemed suddenly to disappear.

From the days of the regency of the Duke of Orléans, in the reign of Louis XV, the Church had been honeycombed with scepticism. The upper clergy as a class were as extravagant as the nobility, and in many instances their scandalous lives made their profession of faith a sham and a mockery. The bishop, wrapped in his purple and lapped in luxury, gave no sign of being a disciple of the lowly and humble Jesus. Such prelates as Dubois, the most notoriously immoral man of his time, Lafiteau, Tencin, Rohan, and Talleyrand are but a few samples of the higher clergy. Dissolute and licen-

tious in their habits, they preached a morality which they compromised by their conduct.

Many of the bishops and those prelates who held high positions in the hierarchy were drawn from the noble families, and they were attracted to the service of the Church more because of its princely revenues and the social distinction its offices conferred than from any spirit of real piety, and often their sacred calling was used but as a cloak to cover the immorality of their lives.

A great number of ecclesiastics, too, were not only profligate but ignorant. "So low had the talents of the once illustrious Church of France fallen," says Allison, "that in the latter part of the eighteenth century when Christianity itself was assailed, not one champion of note appeared in its ranks." In fact, declares the same author, when the Church hurled its anathema against the prevailing infidelity and offered rewards for the best essays in defence of the Christian faith, the productions were so weak and contemptible that they provoked the jeers of unbelievers and really injured the cause of religion. Draper, in his "Intellectual Development of Europe," in commenting upon the different epochs of the Church's career, says: "There is a time of abounding strength, a time of feebleness, a time of ruinous loss, a time of utter exhaustion. What a difference between the eleventh and the eighteenth centuries. It is the noontide and the evening of a day of empire."

In this period of the Church's decadence, it

was unable to offer any effectual resistance to the Revolution, and was overwhelmed by the force and violence of that great upheaval.

The Church had been exacting in the collection of its tithes and had been made enormously rich by the tribute paid and the services rendered under the unrighteous system of feudalism. Corrupted by its great wealth and becoming more avaricious as its wealth increased, it was charged with caring more for the gathering of its tithes than for the salvation of souls.

The Church was so closely identified with the monarchy that they depended for existence upon each other; both were enriched by the same iniquitous system of taxation and when the Revolution came their interests were so interwoven that it was impossible to destroy one without at the same time destroying the other.

It was not the desire nor the intention of Robespierre to revive Christianity nor to re-establish the Church, for he did not believe in the divinity of Christ, in the Trinity, nor in the Virgin Mary. The Nicene Creed was to him a dead letter, but he did profess, as we have seen, a belief in a Supreme Being, and upon his motion the Assembly passed a decree recognizing the existence of God. "How infinitely different," he exclaimed, "is the God of nature from the God of the clergy. What is there in common between the priests and God? The priests are to morality what quacks are to medicine. Let us leave the priests and return to the divinity."

Upon one occasion, in addressing himself to

Elizabeth Duplay, who had spoken slightingly of religion, he said: "You do not know how much consolation is to be obtained from a belief in God." At another time he declared: "If the existence of God and the immortality of the soul were but dreams they would still be the most beautiful conceptions of the human mind."

In the last speech he delivered in the Convention, he eloquently cried out: "No! no! Death is not an eternal sleep! Citizens! Efface from the tomb that motto chiseled into the stone by sacrilegious hands, which motto spreads over all nature a funereal pall, takes from oppressed innocence its support, and affronts the beneficent dispensation of death! Inscribe rather thereon these words: Death is the commencement of immortality."

It was, however, the almost universal belief in France, at that time, that there was no future life, and to settle this all-important question the legislature declared that the soul was immortal. It was further decided that a Festival pompously styled "*Fête de l'Etre Supreme*" should be held to inaugurate the new religious system of Deism, a belief as old as the everlasting hills, but new in so far as its adoption by France was concerned.

David the artist, who had buried Marat, the philosopher of the gutters, with a pomp truly magnificent, was given instructions to make the ceremony grand and impressive. According to the accounts of the time he did both.

An immense amphitheatre was arranged back of the Tuileries and doors leading from the hall

of the Convention opened into this space. In the centre was erected a tribune which was specially reserved for the occupancy of Robespierre, thus making him the principal figure in the scene. All the deputies were dressed alike, in blue coats with red facings, and each deputy carried a bouquet of flowers. They entered the amphitheatre from the hall of the Convention and took the seats of honor assigned them.

Robespierre was in a state of exultation. He wore a coat of blue lighter in shade than the coats worn by his colleagues and his vanity took care to see that the difference was enough to be noticeable. It was buttoned tightly at the waist and, being open above, revealed a white vest and ruffled shirt. The rest of his attire consisted of yellow leather breeches, top-boots, and a round hat covered with ribbons of the national colors. He carried a large bouquet of flowers and wheat ears.

It was a beautiful day and the people entered with enthusiasm into the spirit of the occasion. All punishments were suspended; the guillotine concealed in the folds of rich hangings ceased its bloody work while the nation returned to a recognition of its God. Even the members of the Revolutionary Committee had taken a vacation and watched the ceremony from the windows of the *Pavillon de Flore*.

It was Robespierre's great day and he treated it as such, much to the envy, jealousy, and dissatisfaction of his rivals and colleagues. When he appeared in the amphitheatre and ascended the

tribune reserved for his special use, he was greeted with the wildest acclaim and enthusiasm by the people; never before had he been the recipient of so great a demonstration.

"Frenchmen! republicans!" he said, "at last has arrived the day which the French people have consecrated to the Supreme Being. Never did the world offer to its Author a spectacle more worthy of His regard. He has seen reigning over the earth, tyranny, crime, imposture. He sees at this moment an entire nation, contending against all the oppressors of the human race, suspending their heroic efforts to raise their thoughts and views toward the Great Being who gave them the wisdom to undertake and the force to execute them.

"He did not create kings to devour the human race, nor priests to harness us like beasts to the car of kings. He created the universe to make known His power. He created men to aid and love each other and to attain happiness by walking in the path of virtue.

"It is He that stings with remorse the triumphant oppressor and places in the heart of the oppressed calmness and disdain. He it is that makes the souls of mothers throb with tenderness. The hatred of hypocrisy and tyranny burns in our hearts with the love of justice and of country. Our blood flows for the cause of humanity. This is our prayer, our sacrifice — this the worship we offer unto Thee!"

After delivering this speech, Robespierre descended from the tribune and, with a torch, set

fire to a pile of combustible material which represented Atheism, vice, and crimes. While the flames were reducing this mass to ashes, while the sins of the world were passing away in smoke, trained vocalists sang the hymn the opening lines of which were:

"Ton temple est sur les monts, dans les airs, sur les ondes;
Tu n'as point de passé, Tu n'as point d'avenir,
Et sans les occuper, Tu remplis, tous les mondes,
Qui ne peuvent Te contenir." [1]

At the conclusion of the ceremonies in the amphitheatre, the members of the Convention marched in procession to the Champ de Mars. White oxen, with gilded horns and decorated with tricolored ribbons, drew carts containing the fruits and products of the earth. Numerous emblems represented Agriculture, Commerce, Manufactures, Industry, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and Peace. Robespierre marched far in advance of his colleagues, who every minute were growing more envious of his self-exaltation, and were beginning to mutter their disapproval of his vanity, conceit, and egoism.

In the centre of the Field was a large platform. Couthon, St. Just, and Lebas, the intimate friends and chief supporters of Robespierre, were in conspicuous positions, while the other

[1] Thy temple is on the mountains, in the air, on the waves;
Thou hast nothing of the past, thou hast nothing of the future,
And without occupying it, thou fillest all the world,
Which still cannot contain thee.

deputies occupied seats at the foot of the stage. These men, feeling their humiliation, filled the air with murmurs both loud and deep. Deaf to their complaints, blind to everything but his own exaltation, Robespierre still centred upon himself the attention of the people and amidst salvos of artillery proclaimed the Deity.

On the way back from the Champ de Mars the deputies were sullen. "He invented God," said one, "that he might be His high priest." "He teaches us to adore God," said another, "that we may in time know how to obey a dictator." "Not satisfied in being a politician, he must also assume the rôle of pontiff." "It is but a step from the Capitol to the Tarpeian Rock." "Let him who would overthrow the Republic beware." "The spirit of Brutus yet survives." Such remarks, accompanied with scowls and frowns, would at any other time have aroused the indignation and induced the denunciation of Robespierre, but he was too happy over his successful inauguration of the worship of God to allow such trifles on this day to ruffle the serenity of his mind.

An act of the legislature did not change Atheists into Deists, and many of the members of the Convention looked upon the ceremony as a farce, a travesty, a silly, meaningless performance more for the elevation of Robespierre than for the adoration of God.

He had made a mistake in doing all the talking among so many orators, a score of whom, no doubt, thought themselves far better fitted for the

task than he was. Further than this he erred in monopolizing too much of the day's honor; he had not made a fair distribution of its dignities and consequently had aroused a spirit of envy and an antagonism that was to last. His conduct gave an opportunity to his enemies to create a suspicion as to his purpose and ambition.

Although Robespierre's influence was never stronger in the Convention than at this point, it was his assumption and the confidence he had in himself to accomplish anything that caused his overthrow and destruction.

CHAPTER XXVI

LAW OF THE 22ND PRAIRIAL — ROBESPIERRE'S FRIENDS URGE HIM TO SEIZE DICTATORSHIP.

Two days after the Festival, Couthon, at the instance of Robespierre, proposed what is known as "the Law of the 22nd Prairial." A viler piece of Draconian legislation was never enacted. It provided for the reorganization of the Revolutionary Tribunal, increased its authority, enlarged the scope of its jurisdiction, deprived the accused of the right to be represented by counsel, and gave a partisan jury the power to condemn, even without testimony or proof, whenever their minds were satisfied by any evidence legal or moral. Every rule of law was ignored, every principle of justice was outraged. Those who were only suspected of disloyalty to the Revolution or of treason against the Republic were subject to arrest and condemnation; even the members of the Convention were not exempt or excepted from the provisions of the act, in fact, the law was passed to terrify and deter those deputies who were the enemies of Robespierre. It required whip and spur to drive such a measure through the Convention, and in the course of the debate at the time of its consideration Ruamps declared: "If we allow this bill to pass, with-

out an adjournment, there will be nothing left for us to do but to blow out our brains."

"Since we are free from factions," said Robespierre, pointing to the vacant seat of Danton, "we discuss and vote at once; these demands for adjournment at a time like this are mere affectations." The measure, obnoxious and unjust as it was in all its features, passed that night, and the enemies of Robespierre feared for their heads.

It was this Law of the 22nd Prairial that made possible the dreadful effusion of blood in the later days of the "Reign of Terror" and Robespierre may justly be held responsible, or at least indirectly so, for the executions during that period, if for no other reason than because of the part he took in securing the enactment of this infamous measure.

After the Festival of the Supreme Being, Robespierre had received many threatening letters, and to insure his personal safety he urged the enactment of this iniquitous bill. To be able to secure such legislation shows the great power he possessed at this period of his career; the act itself was passed in the very pride and insolence of conscious strength; but it was going too far, and it united all his enemies and marked the beginning of his downfall.

The day after the passage of the measure the deputies fully realized the fact that it destroyed the inviolability of the parliament, and a resolution was adopted providing that no member could

be taken before the Revolutionary Tribunal without the consent of the Convention.

On the day following, Robespierre appeared in the Convention and demanded the repeal of the said resolution. It was repealed. This was on the 24th Prairial in the second year of the Republic, June 12, 1794, and this date marks the high point in the political power and supremacy of Robespierre. He now stood at a dizzy height and it required a steady head and a sober brain to maintain his elevation. His conduct in relation to this act and the repeal of the resolution evinced the spirit of the despot, and the minds of men were seized with dread and apprehension.

St. Just made matters worse by working and scheming for a dictatorship; so impressed was he by the honor shown to his master by the people on the day of the *fête* that he thought the time was propitious for such a move.

He laid his plan before Robespierre, but that austere patriot, apparently, would not listen to his temptations. St. Just, however, believed that Robespierre would waive aside the crown only until the applause of the people assured him that they were willing he should wear it, so St. Just continued his labors and endeavored quietly to enlist the support of his friends in the Assembly; but his efforts in this direction met with no great success. Such a secret could not long be hidden, and it soon became street-corner comment. The matter had to be deftly handled, for

the foes of Robespierre were already at work trying to injure his popularity by declaring that he was about to overthrow the Republic and assume the rôle of a despot. These stories were beginning to have their effect upon the public mind; for, although the people were willing to set up and worship their own idol, they did not want it turned into a tyrant.

Feeling that his popularity was waning, Robespierre was wise enough to allay suspicion by proposing legislation that evinced the real revolutionary spirit, but his friends would not abate their efforts, and they kept dangling the prize before his ambition. "Woe to men," he exclaimed, "who sum up the country in themselves and possess themselves of liberty as if their own property. Their country dies with them and the revolutions which they appropriate to themselves are but changes of servitude. No — no Cromwell, not even I, myself."

The friends of Robespierre grew impatient under the assaults made upon them by their enemies in the Convention. "Where is Danton?" was their cry. "Would to God that Robespierre possessed the thirst of power of which they accuse him. The Republic needs an ambitious man; he is only a wise one."

Whether or not Robespierre at this period of his life was influenced solely by patriotic motives or was wanting in the courage and audacity necessary to usurp the power of the Republic will never be known. The rod of empire was lying close at hand, and he needed only the nerve

that was necessary to seize and sway it. But Robespierre was not of heroic mold; he did not possess the spirit of a Cæsar, a Cromwell, or a Napoleon, and it was the resolute courage of such men he required if he was to play the part of a usurper and a dictator. "He had," says Mignet, "at this critical period a prodigious force at his disposal. The lowest orders supported him, . . . the armed force of Paris was at his back, he ruled with absolute sway at the Jacobins', and all important places were filled with his creatures."

If Robespierre ever did contemplate seizing the reins of government and proclaiming himself dictator, by his hesitation and timidity he allowed the chance to slip away. A temporizing policy cannot win in so desperate a game; to secure the prize one must strike quickly and while the iron is hot; delay loses the opportunity. Success alone seems to justify the crime of usurpation.

The position Robespierre occupied was a precarious, a dangerous one. To maintain it called for the exercise of the greatest judgment and skill. Sophistry, pretension, cant, and platitudes no longer availed. What he needed were courage, resolution, audacity.

He was like a pilot in a stormy sea near a rocky coast, and he had to know the waters he was sailing. "Revolutions," said Danton, "are like long and difficult voyages during which one must expect the wind to blow from all quarters at once. The open sea is often less dangerous than the harbor, for which one makes with all

sails set and never a thought of the narrow shoal on which, sometimes, the ship goes down."

If Robespierre had assumed absolute power and had wielded it temperately under a condition of restored peace and order, he would have been lauded even by many of his enemies and history would have placed his name among the illustrious, for his act would have been vindicated by his success. In such matters it is treason to desire but a triumph to acquire.

If he had succeeded in putting an end to carnage and in establishing order it would have meant much for his fame and reputation; for then, instead of being held responsible for the excesses of the "Reign of Terror," he would have been praised for having caused their cessation and no doubt even forgiven for the part he had taken in their perpetration. The world is blind to the errors and crimes of its successful men.

The vast majority of the people were tired of the slaughter and violence and longed for a settled government. One of the instructive but sad lessons of history is that men as a rule do not mind the thraldom if the yoke does not gall. When Augustus assumed the purple and usurped the power of the republic, "he artfully contrived," says Gibbon, "that in the enjoyment of plenty the Romans should lose the memory of freedom."

The conditions in France were the same as they had been, at one time, in Rome. "I see," said Catiline to Cicero, "I see in the republic a

head without a body and a body without a head. I will be this head which is wanting." This is the language that the partisans of Robespierre would fain have heard him utter. Usurpation at this point was not impossible and his success might have changed the whole future history of France.

It was only a few years subsequent to the period of which we are writing that Napoleon, under the prestige and glory of his military successes, seized the Consulate and afterwards crowned himself emperor of the French.

At one time Robespierre declared that it was the ambition of his heart to have the Revolution end in himself. The moment was at hand to fulfil his wish, the course was open, but to reach the goal required courage and determination. Like Danton, at the critical point he drew back and lost the prize that was almost within touch.

CHAPTER XXVII

CATHARINE THEOT — MADAME DE SAINT-AMARANTHE — HER EXECUTION — THE REIGN OF DEATH.

Robespierre's troubles now accumulated on all sides, and his enemies, fearful and watchful, took advantage of every turn in the condition of affairs.

An old woman named Catharine Theot, residing in a dreary suburb of Paris, called herself the mother of God and claimed to be endowed with foresight and prophecy. Her surname, Theot, was changed, because of her pretensions, to Theos; this was done in ridicule by her enemies, but the substitution was adopted seriously by her friends and helped to increase their faith in her powers.

Catharine was born on March 5, 1716, at Barrenton near Avranches. From her youth she was peculiar in her conduct and at last developed into a mad visionary. She declared herself to be the reincarnation of Mother Eve and in the reign of Louis XVI was shut up in the Salpêtrière as a lunatic, but was released in 1782.

This poor creature gathered about her quite a following. Dom Gerle, a monk of the Order of St. Bruno, constituted himself her chief dis-

ciple; in fact, her high priest. He was a friend of Robespierre and had, at times, visited him at his lodgings. Catharine and Dom Gerle established a kind of church or cult, and although the services were conducted quietly, almost secretly, they were well attended.

When this old Pythoness sat upon the stool of prophecy, she professed to see in her hallucinations the coming Messiah in the person of Robespierre, and she declared that he was to be, in time, the Savior of the world.

Far removed from the hovel of this old hag, in sumptuous apartments in a polite quarter of the city, lived a woman of incomparable beauty. She was known as Madame de Saint-Amaranthe. She was aristocratic in her tastes and claimed to be the same in her associations, but she was so free in her manner of life that a doubt was cast upon her respectability. She claimed to be the widow of an officer who lost his life at the door of the bed-chamber of the queen, while gallantly defending her Majesty from attack on the morning of October 6, 1789.

Madame de Saint-Amaranthe professed great admiration for Robespierre. She was anxious to meet him, believing, no doubt, that she could fascinate with her arts and her beauty this man who had been invincible and proof against the seductive charms of all other women. She saw in him the means of restoring peace and this was the end she was eager to attain. Hearing of the prophecies of Catharine, she had a long interview with the witch, and after the celebration

of some mystic rites she was admitted into the mysterious circle.

Vadier, an implacable enemy of Robespierre, sent a spy to gather information and to pry into the secrets of the sect; his report resulted in the arrest of Catharine, Dom Gerle, Madame de Saint-Amaranthe and her daughter, together with a number of ardent but less distinguished disciples. They were brought before the bar of the court, and among other things it was shown that the old sibyl in her incantations had declared that she was the mother of Robespierre as well as the mother of God. Of course the enemies of Robespierre took every opportunity in view of these disclosures to hold him up to public ridicule, and they even went so far as to circulate the story that he was conspiring to establish a religious as well as a political despotism, and in corroboration of their assertions they referred to his conduct upon the occasion of the Festival of the Supreme Being.

Robespierre's blood was up, and he demanded that the Committee of Public Safety should stop a prosecution which had for its only purpose his personal humiliation. Fouquier Tinville, the public prosecutor, declared that he was without power to discontinue the proceedings in view of the fact that they had been directed by a decree of the Convention. It is certain, however, that some authority intervened, for Catharine died in prison and Dom Gerle survived the Revolution many years; but Madame de Saint-Amaranthe, her daughter, and some other persons

connected with the delusion went to the scaffold.

A story put in circulation by the enemies of Robespierre was that Madame de Saint-Amaranthe, who was anxious to secure the safety of her family by polite attentions to Robespierre, induced a well-known actor named Trial to bring him to her house, where he was most sumptuously entertained and dined, and while "the monster was soaked in wine" he grew communicative and confidential and revealed some important state and political secrets.

The next day he was informed that while in a mellow mood he had dropped in conversation some things he ought not to have divulged. He at once required a list of the names of all that were of the company and also of the servants that waited at the table; and in a few days the hostess, her family, friends, and domestics were marked for death.

This is one of the rumors that, although without any foundation in truth, Robespierre's abstemiousness being well known, seriously injured his reputation, and subjected him to public execration.

The whole story falls to the ground when it is stated that Robespierre was present at the reception in May while the archives of the prefecture of police show that Madame was arrested in March and committed to the prison of Saint Pélagie about the beginning of April, 1794.

The so-called attack upon Robespierre's life by Cécile Regnault and the expressed intention of L'Admiral to assassinate him were used by his

rivals and enemies as a means to injure his popularity. The Committee of Public Safety caused the arrest of Cécile's father and aunt because in their dwelling were found hanging on the walls the portraits of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette; her two brothers also were arrested, but were subsequently discharged upon proof that they had been soldiers in the army. The mistress of L'Admiral and a citizen who had dined with him a few days before his arrest, also were taken into custody; even the porter of the house in which Collot was attacked was included in the list for no other reason than that he did not rejoice when the assassin was arrested. An actress who had known Baron de Batz (the latter was supposed to be one of the conspirators with Cécile) was also apprehended; and, worst of all, her maid Nicolle, a young girl only sixteen years of age, was named in the warrant.

A group of prisoners, forty-eight in number, including Cécile, L'Admiral, Madame de Saint-Amaranthe, and her daughter, all represented as the victims of Robespierre's vengeance, were sent to the scaffold.

The guillotine had been removed to the eastern end of the city, and the long line of tumbrils rolled through the crowded section of St. Antoine. To make the procession more impressive, it was directed by the authorities that the condemned, who filled eight guillotine carts, should be clothed in red, the color of the garb of assassins. The march lasted three hours. Of

course it was generally known that many of the condemned were entirely innocent, and in no way connected with the attempt on Robespierre's life. His enemies studiously circulated the report that these arrests and executions were at his instance and the people began to lose faith in the integrity of a man who was so prodigal of blood as to sacrifice even the innocent in a desire to avenge a personal wrong.

Against slaughter so useless and indiscriminate, Robespierre earnestly protested. "Then why do you not attend the meetings of the committee and aid in picking out the guilty, instead of standing aloof and complaining," said the irascible Vadier. "You are our tyrant." Robespierre grew angry and declared he would retire and never again appear at the sessions of the committee, and he kept his word. For six weeks he absented himself from the committee and the Convention and attended only the meetings of the Jacobins.

This absence unquestionably relieves him, in a great measure, from personal responsibility, so far as the carnage of that period is concerned. He, no doubt, was kept well posted by his friends, Couthon and St. Just, as to what was happening; and, although his name appears during this time signed to a number of public documents, he took no active part in the executive and legislative functions of the government.

In the meantime there was no break in the line of executions; the death carts, crowded with victims, rumbled through the streets on their way

to the scaffold; there had been no time in the history of the Revolution when the lives of citizens seemed so insecure. In this wild carnival of blood, a former maid of Marie Antoinette was condemned and executed for having once dressed the hair of the queen with a white cockade. The death penalty was inflicted upon scores of persons for charges as trivial. "Alone and unopposed, the Committee of Public Safety struck numberless blows from one end of the kingdom to the other." France was bleeding at every pore.

In the cities of Nantes, Bordeaux, Marseilles, and Toulon, it seemed as if the furies of hell had been let loose only to conceive methods of torture that would add to the horrors of death. "Republican Baptisms," "Republican Marriages," and "*Battues*" were the names playfully given to some of these methods of wholesale slaughter. Hundreds of persons would be crowded into vessels which would be towed out into deep water and scuttled; a man and a woman would be bound together and tossed into the river; or great numbers of victims would be arranged in rank and file and torn to pieces with grape and cannister. Three hundred orphaned children of the Vendean counter-revolutionists were taken from prison by night and drowned in the Loire. The land was drenched with blood and the rivers ran red to the sea. France was in a delirium; it seemed all a ghastly dream.

It is impossible to estimate the number of victims sacrificed, but in Nantes alone it is said

that thirty thousand perished during the "Reign of Terror."

The prisons in Paris were filled with suspected persons. At one time they numbered between seven and eight thousand. Crowds of prisoners, arriving at the gates for admission, passed others who were on their way to the scaffold. Commiserating with each other they bravely exchanged friendly salutations.

There was a time, prior to the period of which we are speaking, when the prisoners were supplied with the comforts of life, and even with the luxuries, if they were able to pay for them; but now all classes were huddled together indiscriminately, even indecently; they ate at common tables and were served with the plainest food which was not only meanly prepared but was also of poor quality and unwholesome. The records of that period show that the accused were no longer confined to the aristocratic classes, for among the condemned were tailors, shoemakers, butchers, farmers, hairdressers, sempstresses, publicans, and even laboring men.

Spies were introduced into the prisons and mingled with the inmates. These inquisitive wretches overheard the conversations, watched the conduct of the prisoners, and marked many of them for slaughter. The lists they submitted at the end of each day were called by the gaolers "the evening journal." The flimsiest and most insubstantial charges were sufficient to support an accusation: one prisoner, for instance, was accused of having used aristocratic language;

another, of having drunk on a certain day when a defeat of the armies was announced. Every word, every look, every act was noted. To retain the confidence of their employers and to show that they were vigilant and diligent in their employment, the spies could not afford to have the number of victims diminish and in consequence they did not hesitate to trump up false charges.

During the long nights in that period of terror, sleep was almost impossible, for the cold-hearted gaolers purposely excited alarms by rattling chairs and unbarring the doors. The suspense was terrible, for no one knew what moment he or she would be summoned to death, and under the terrific strain suicide was not infrequent.

When the virtuous Malesherbes and several members of his family were called upon to mount the cart, his daughter hastily sought out among the prisoners her friend, Mademoiselle Sombreuil, to bid her good-by, and with rapture exclaimed: "You had once the happiness, during the September Massacres, to save your father, and I am now going to die with mine." This is only one of the many instances of supreme courage in those days of agony. Death had lost its terrors and resolution had usurped the place of fear.

General Loiserolles, a nobleman by nature as well as by birth, was a prisoner at Saint Lazare. While standing at the grate, one day, listening to the calling of the death list, he heard the name

of his son, who at that moment was asleep. Promptly the old man answered: "I am Loiserolles," and at once stepped forward, took his place in the column, and went bravely to the scaffold. "Greater love hath no man than this." Sad to relate, however, this noble and self-sacrificing act of the father did not save the son, for the latter was subsequently brought before the tribunal and condemned to death.

So great was the slaughter in the days of the "Terror" that a special sewer had to be constructed to carry off from the guillotine the blood of the victims.

The Revolutionary Tribunal had no semblance of a court of justice, it had become a charnel house. The judges, jurors, and prosecuting officers seemed lost to every sentiment of humanity. No mercy was shown even to mothers. One woman had her infant torn from her breast on the platform of the guillotine, and another was delivered of a child while on her way to execution. The cruel work was not interrupted by such incidents. There was no sympathy for the afflicted. A prisoner brought to the bar who had been stricken with paralysis and deprived of his speech was brutally told by the presiding judge that it was not his tongue that was wanted but his head.

M. Fleury, a prisoner confined in the Luxembourg, wrought up to desperation by the calamities that had befallen him, wrote a letter to Dumas, one of the revolutionary judges, in which he said: "Man of blood, thou hast murdered

my family and there is no reason why thou shouldst not condemn me to the same fate, for I declare to thee that I participate in their sentiments." Dumas handed the letter to Fouquier Tinville, the prosecuting officer, saying: "Here is a little note — read it." "This gentleman," replied Fouquier, "is in a great hurry; he must be satisfied." The prisoner was brought at once to the bar, charged with conspiracy, named as the accomplice of persons he had never known, and in an hour was on his way to the scaffold.

To expedite the executions, Fouquier had the guillotine erected in the hall of the tribunal, and had the accused arraigned and tried in lots. This wholesale and summary method of slaughter seemed to offend, or at least to meet with the disapproval of, even some of the most sanguinary members of the Convention. "What!" cried Collot d'Herbois in an apparent transport of indignation, "Wouldst thou then demoralize death itself?" The trial of prisoners *"en masse"* was soon abandoned and the scaffold was removed from the court-room.

Next to the hall of the tribunal a printing office was located, and as the prisoners were found guilty their names were handed through a hole in the wall and after the adjournment of the court the list was published for the information of the public. Newsboys sold the "Bulletin of the Tribunal" under the very windows of the prisons, crying out: "Here are the names of those who have gained the prizes in the lottery of Sainte Guillotine." It can easily be

FOUQUIER TINVILLE

From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.

imagined with what eagerness the prisoners bought the papers and with what solicitude they scanned the lists.

In all this time of blood, the centre of attraction was the guillotine. It must be borne in mind that this bloody instrument stood open to the public view in busy and crowded sections of the city. Originally it occupied the Carrousel; afterwards it was removed to the Place Louis XV, where it stood close to a great statue of Liberty; subsequently it was erected in the faubourg Saint Antoine near the ruins of the Bastile; after remaining here for a short time it was set up in an open space in the neighborhood of the Barriere du Trône; and finally it was brought back to the Place Louis XV, where it remained during the closing scenes of the Revolution.

The community had grown so pitiless, their sensibilities deadened, no doubt, by becoming accustomed to the terrible spectacles they daily witnessed, that men, women, and children gathered about the scaffold and watched the executions without emotion. Seats were provided for the public and sold as at a theatre. A special space was reserved for the women of the markets in recognition of the part they had taken in leading the mob to Versailles on the 5th day of October, 1789, and from morning until night these beldams, as pitiless as the Fates, sat in the shadow of the guillotine knitting socks and keeping count as the heads fell into the basket.

From August 17, 1792, to October 2, 1793,

a little more than a year, the period in which Danton was supreme, the executions in Paris were ninety in number. From October 2, 1793, to April 5, 1794, about six months, when he virtually had withdrawn from active participation in public life and was spending much of his time at Arcis, there were 552 executions; no wonder he desired a reaction.

From April 5, 1794, the date of Danton's death, to July 28, 1794, the day when Robespierre went to the scaffold, a space of three months and three weeks, the executions reached the appalling number of 2,085. "The very air," exclaimed Fouché, "is full of poniards." For this dreadful carnage Robespierre was held responsible, when in truth he was endeavoring to check it. "Death — always death! and the scoundrels throw it all on me," he is said to have exclaimed in private, time and again. "What a memory I shall leave behind me if this lasts. Life to me is a burden."

It was impossible to make people believe that his influence in the committee was not strong enough to stop this slaughter if he so desired, and consequently he was held to blame for it.

"To the outer world and to posterity," writes Stephens, "Robespierre has seemed the ruling power of the Great Committee; but, in fact, he earned neither all the praise nor all the blame which has been cast upon it and upon him."

Robespierre was elected by the Convention a member of the Committee of Public Safety on July 27, 1793, in the place of Gasparin, who re-

signed owing to illness. He thus, for the first time in his political career, held an official position which made him one of the actual rulers of France, for it was this body that was the executive head and force of the nation. The committee was not finally constituted under the reorganization until about the middle of September. At this time it was composed of twelve members. Of these, Carnot, Billaud-Varennes, Collot d'Herbois, Prieur of the Marne, Prieur of the Cote d'Or, Jean Bon Saint Andre, and Robert Lindet were men of action and of independent spirit, and were in no wise influenced or controlled in their political conduct by Robespierre. Herault de Séchelles was an adherent of Danton. Barère was a trimmer, who served any party so long as it was to his interest to do so, but in no sense of the word was he a supporter or follower of Robespierre. It will thus be seen that Robespierre was in the minority, and really had but two friends in the committee upon whom he could depend, Couthon and St. Just. Even after the removal of Herault de Séchelles, who went to the scaffold with Danton, the conditions were not changed.

It is true that Robespierre appeared in the eye of the public as the creative and controlling power in the committee, but the reason for this can easily be given. Men like Carnot and Billaud were not conspicuous speakers in the Convention, nor idols of the mob; in fact, they were indifferent to that popularity which Robespierre so assiduously cultivated, and they did not object to his appearing as their mouthpiece in the Convention so long

as he did not interfere with their work and plans. In truth, they often used his popularity and well-known incorruptibility as a defence for their methods. It was in this way he was made to appear as the dominating spirit in the committee and was held responsible for its acts, when, in reality, he had but little influence in its councils.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ROBESPIERRE'S ENEMIES PLOT HIS DOWNFALL — ROBESPIERRE GROWS SUPINE.

The king, the queen, the Girondins, the Hébertists, the Dantonists, had all gone to the scaffold. Robespierre was the most prominent man in the Republic. To maintain his position, however, and to restore peace required the further shedding of blood. Billaud-Varennes, Collot d'Herbois, Tallien, Barras, and Fouché should have been sacrificed or at least rendered powerless; then he could have closed the "Reign of Terror" and abolished the Committee of Public Safety and the Revolutionary Tribunal. Having gone so far, a little further blood letting would not have added much more to the cost of the Revolution, especially in view of the character of the men that would have had to be immolated.

Collot d'Herbois, the Nero of Lyons, and Billaud-Varennes were both ferocious revolutionists and gave no signs of abating their methods. Of the latter Garat said: "*Il fauche dans les têtes comme un autre dans les prés.*"—"He mows down men as another would grass." In the Convention he advocated the most sanguinary measures, and was one of the fiercest tigers in that jungle. Napoleon pronounced him "the most

cruel of all the creatures that ruled the 'Reign of Terror.'" These men were envious of the elevation and prominence of Robespierre but they were cunning and affected a friendship until it was safe to show their enmity.

Tallien was a corrupt, sordid creature, whose administration in Bordeaux had been scandalous. He had been made desperate by the arrest and imprisonment of his mistress, the beautiful Thérezia Cabarrus, whose life he feared would depend upon the word of Robespierre. Tallien well knew that appeals for mercy from a woman of her class would make no impression upon the stony heart of such a man. Her only safety, therefore, was in Robespierre's overthrow and to this end Tallien bent all his energy.

Barras and Fouché hated Robespierre and stood in mortal dread of his power. They were a mean, contemptible pair of rascals, whom he had threatened; they, in turn, were only waiting for an opportunity to strike. They were men not to be ignored, were born conspirators, utterly unscrupulous, of great invention and endless resources. The ruling ambition of Fouché was to be Chief of Police. He possessed to a refined degree every attribute of the spy, and he followed his victim like a sleuthhound. Both belonged to that class or faction that St. Just said desired to make Liberty a prostitute.

These were the men whom Robespierre had to fear; their banishment or imprisonment would have opened the way for a restoration of peace and order.

BILLAUD-VARENNES

From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.
After a painting by Raffet

There can be no question that at this time Robespierre was tired of the slaughter, and longed for a reaction and for the establishment of a government other than by committee. "Robespierre perished," says Lavasseur de la Sarthe, "at the very moment when he was preparing to return to a system of justice and humanity." Napoleon told O'Meara that he had seen letters written by Robespierre to his brother, who was the national representative with the army at Nice, in which he clearly stated that it was his determination to end the "Reign of Terror."

About this time Robespierre received a deputation from the department of Aisne, which complained of the operations of the government and chided him for absenting himself from the public sittings of the Convention. "The Convention," he replied, "gangreened as it is with corruption, has no longer the power to save the Republic. Both will perish. The proscription of the patriots is the order of the day." Such language aroused the anger and suspicion of his enemies and put on guard so wily, subtle, and desperate an antagonist as Billaud-Varennes.

During this period, when Robespierre should have displayed the greatest vigor, he sought seclusion for hours at a time in the forest of Meudon or under the trees of St. Cloud, wandering about with book in hand, meditating, doubtless, upon that government he had formed in his mind: a republic in which God was to be revered, where virtue was to be practised, that would provide universal education and an open

franchise, that would impose just taxation, and would guarantee equality before the law.

Nature was unkind when she instilled ideals so lofty into the mind of a man whose ability was not equal to the task of carrying them into effect. If it was his purpose to make an effort to secure these blessings and privileges for his country, he could not afford to be moping through the woods.

For hours, too, he would remain in his room immersed in study, keeping in touch with the outer world through the medium of his confidential friends, Couthon and St. Just. He seemed possessed of a spirit of irresolution. Fearing to be left behind, he yet did not know how to keep up in the race.

A languor like that which overcame Danton was paralyzing his energy. His friends appealed to him to come out of his lethargy. Couthon urged him to act. St. Just tried to instil into his master the enthusiasm of his own spirit. "Strike quietly and strongly," he said. "Dare! that is the secret of revolutions."

Out of the past came the words of Danton ringing in his ears: "A nation in revolution is like the bronze boiling and foaming and purifying itself in the cauldron. Not yet is the statue of Liberty cast. Fiercely boils the metal; have an eye on the furnace or the flame will surely scorch you."

CHAPTER XXIX

ROBESPIERRE'S LAST SPEECH IN THE CONVENTION

To meet the conditions, Robespierre, instead of organizing his forces and making ready for battle, spent his time in composing a long speech. It was written with even more than his usual care. During its preparation, for the sake of inspiration no doubt, he visited Ermenonville to meditate at the tomb of his master, Jean Jacques Rousseau.

When he delivered his oration in the Convention he was given the closest attention, but unfortunately, in the course of his remarks, he reflected upon Cambon, a worthy and reliable man, who demanded an immediate retraction of the offensive utterances. Realizing at once that he had committed an error, Robespierre endeavored to make amends by a half-hearted, halting apology; but he only made matters worse by his mangled explanation. He committed a further mistake by plainly intimating that there were a number of men proscribed who would soon be called to the bar to answer for their crimes. This was worse even than naming them outright, for it left every man in the Convention uncertain as to his fate. He threatened without

striking, and he united his enemies in a common effort to overthrow him. He had made it appear that their safety depended upon his destruction.

In this remarkable speech he said in part: "The revolutions which up to this day have changed the fate of empires have had for their object only a change of dynasty or the transition of power from one to many. The French Revolution is the first which was founded upon the theory of the rights of mankind and the principles of justice. Other revolutions only incite ambition — ours imposes virtue. The Republic has glided, if we may so speak, between all factions, but it has found their power organized around it and has also been incessantly persecuted since its birth in the person of every man of good faith who fought for it. The friends of liberty seek to overthrow the power of tyrants by the force of truth — tyrants seek to destroy the defenders of liberty by calumny — they give the name of tyranny even to the ascendancy of the principles of truth. . . . This word, dictatorship, is, however, possessed of magical effect. It withers liberty, it destroys the Republic. . . . What terrible use the enemies of the Republic have made of the name only of a Roman magistracy.

"They call me a tyrant. If I were so, they would grovel at my feet. I would gorge them with gold; I would assure to them the right of committing every crime. If I were so, the kings whom we have vanquished, far from discovering

to me what tender interest they take in our liberty, would lend me their aid; I should make a compact with them. Tyranny is attained by the assistance of robbers. What becomes of those who combat them? They go to the tomb and to immortality. Which is the tyrant who protects me? Which is the faction to which I belong? It is yourselves. Truth has doubtless its power, its wrath, and its despotism. It has touching and terrible accents which resound forcibly in pure hearts as well as in guilty consciences; and which falsehood can no more imitate than Salmoneus could imitate the thunder of heaven."

He criticised in turn the several departments of the government. "In whose hands are the finances?" he exclaimed. "In the hands of known rogues, of the Cambons, the Mallarmés, the Ramels." In referring to the war department, he reflected upon even Carnot and declared: "The military administration wraps itself up in a suspicious authority." He warned the deputies to keep a vigilant eye on Belgium; and intimated that a great military victory might be a menace to the Republic.

The Committee of Public Safety also came in for a share of censure. "We assert that there exists a conspiracy against the public liberty; that it owes its strength to a criminal coalition which intrigues in the very bosom of the Convention; that this coalition has accomplices in the Committee of Public Safety and in the bureaus of that committee which they govern; that mem-

bers of the Committee of Public Safety are engaged in this plot; that the coalition thus formed is striving to ruin the patriots and the country.

"The remedy for the evil is to punish the traitors, to renew the bureaus, to purify the Committee of Public Safety, and to establish the government under the supreme authority of the National Convention. Such are the principles. If it is impossible to claim them without passing for an ambitious man, I shall conclude that principles are proscribed and that tyranny reigns among us, but I shall not, on that account, be silent, for what fault can be found with a man who is in the right, and who is ready to die for his country? I am made to combat crime — not to govern it. The time is not yet arrived when good men can serve their country with impunity."

After stating that he had been charged with all the sins and excesses of the Revolution, he added: "I know well who these calumniators are, but I dare not name them at this moment and in this place. I cannot resolve to tear off entirely the veil which covers this profound mystery of iniquity, but I can positively affirm that among the authors of this plot are the agents of a system of corruption and extravagance, the most powerful of any means invented by foreigners to destroy the Republic, and that they are the impure apostles of atheism and the immorality of which it is the basis.

"I know well," he continued, "who my enemies are. To-day they caress me anew, their

language is more affectionate than ever; three days back they were ready to denounce me as a Catiline; to-day they attribute to me the virtues of a Cato."

The speech left too much unsaid; its suggestions and insinuations created suspicions and dread in the minds of his personal enemies and political opponents. It intimated that he had vengeance in store for those who had condemned him and that they, in time, would be the victims of his wrath. In this speech he had written his death warrant.

When he descended from the tribune, there was an oppressive, an ominous hush in the hall; friends hesitated to applaud and enemies feared to hiss.

Lecointre moved that the speech be printed, but Bourdon de l'Oise opposed the motion on the ground that it contained matters that should be carefully considered in committee before they were published broadcast. A controversy took place and the house was thrown into a tumult. Robespierre was violently assailed by Panis, one of his former partisans, who declared that his name with several others had been placed in a list of proscribed.

Fouché had been industriously circulating the report among the deputies that many of their number were marked for destruction. Although concealed by day, for fear of arrest, he sneaked around under cover of night and disturbed the sleep and rest of the deputies with the startling information he imparted. He was a most plaus-

ible liar, a master of invention, and his rumors were bearing fruit.

Assailed from all sides, Robespierre refused to give a single name. He met the attack of his enemies, however, without flinching. "Throwing aside my buckler," he exclaimed, "I have offered myself uncovered to my enemies. I retract nothing. I do not flatter anyone. I fear no one." "Name those whom you accuse," cried Charlier. "You who pretend to have the courage of virtue have also that of truth." But Robespierre remained silent, and at the first opportunity left the Assembly.

That night at the Jacobins' the meeting was crowded and enthusiastic. Robespierre received an ovation and was, by unanimous vote, requested to read his speech which the Convention had refused to print. It was a lengthy oration which took nearly two hours to deliver, but it was warmly received and punctuated with rapturous applause.

In concluding his address Robespierre said: "This speech, which you have just heard, is my last will and testament. This I perceived to-day. The league of the wicked is so strong that I cannot hope to escape it. I fall without regret. I leave you my memory; it will be dear to you and you will defend it."

The hall rang with shouts and protestations of loyalty. Henriot, in his enthusiasm, cried out that he still knew the way to the Convention and his words seemed to revive the drooping courage of Robespierre. Continuing, the latter said:

"Separate the wicked from the weak, deliver the Convention from the villains who oppress it; render it the service it expects from you, as on the 31st of May, and the 2nd of June. March and once more save liberty. If in spite of all our efforts we must fall, why then, my friends, you shall see me drink hemlock with composure."

"No! No!" resounded on all sides. To make the scene more dramatic, the artist David, carried away by his enthusiasm, seized the orator by the hand and exclaimed in rapture: "I will drink the cup with thee!" Other ardent supporters made like vows. Robespierre never seemed stronger in the affection of his friends and followers, though if they could have seen that the end was so near they might not have been so generous in their offers of personal sacrifice.

Billaud and Collot made several efforts to speak, but the audience was in no mood to listen to them, and when they persisted in being heard the greatest excitement prevailed; threats were made, knives were drawn, they were driven from the meeting, and fled for their lives.

CHAPTER XXX

ROBESPIERRE ASSAILED IN THE CONVENTION — HIS ACCUSATION AND ARREST — EXECUTION OF ROBESPIERRE AND HIS FRIENDS.

The next morning when Robespierre appeared in the Convention, he was met with sullen looks. St. Just attempted to address the chamber, but was immediately interrupted by calls and howls from every quarter of the hall. Lebas came to his assistance, but by this time the Convention was in an uproar. Robespierre ascended the steps of the tribune, but his presence only increased the confusion. "Down with the tyrant," was the cry of the delegates.

Tallien, wild with excitement, drew a dirk, which it is said his beloved Thérézia had sent to him, and brandishing it in the air advanced in a threatening manner towards Robespierre. The latter tried to speak, but hesitated. "Look!" cried Garnier. "It is the blood of Danton that chokes him." "Is it Danton you avenge? Cowards! Why did you not then defend him?" was the pregnant answer.

Billaud and Collot, remembering the treatment they had received the night before at the Jacobins', now took vengeance on their enemy and joined in the general denunciation. Robespierre

made another effort to speak, but he was silenced by the bell of the chairman. Turning upon him he cried out in desperation: "President of Assassins, will you not hear me?" "How long is this man to be master of the Convention," cried Duval. "Ah!" shrieked Fréron, "it is no easy task to beat down a tyrant." Scott, in describing the scene, says: "Robespierre, like the hunter of classical antiquity when on the point of being torn to pieces by his own dogs, tried in vain to raise those screeching notes by which the Convention formerly had been terrified and put to silence." Turning to the Mountain he saw nothing but lukewarm friends and furious enemies; then addressing the Plain he cried: "I appeal to you, pure and virtuous men, and not to ruffians." In response they only scowled and murmured their threats. Dispirited and exhausted by fatigue and passion, he sank back into his seat, the very picture of defeat and despair; beads of perspiration stood upon his brow, his mouth foamed, his voice grew thick and husky, his language was incoherent. Overwhelmed, beaten down by his enemies who assailed him from all sides, he at last was compelled to surrender, but it must be said to his credit that he did not at any point during these exciting scenes display the spirit of the craven; he neither cringed nor begged for quarter.

A deputy named Louchet, who never before had addressed the Convention, rose and said: "No one will deny that Robespierre has played the master," and then, amidst shouts of approval,

he moved his arrest. That of St. Just and of Couthon was also decreed, and at their own request Lebas and Augustin Robespierre were included in the warrant. "I share the crimes of my brother," exclaimed Augustin; "let me share his fate." As Robespierre passed out of the hall in the custody of an officer he muttered: "The Republic is lost, the brigands triumph."

During the night, the friends of the prisoners made a last effort to arouse the Sections. The tocsin was rung and artillery was discharged at regular intervals. Henriot, commander of the National Guards, mounted a horse and charged through the district of St. Antoine like a madman, calling the citizens to arms; but everything had been so quietly executed by the authorities and in so summary a manner that the people did not understand the meaning of this furious appeal. Henriot, who under the excitement had imbibed somewhat too freely of wine, was arrested, but was soon released from gaol by two hundred National Guards.

It was midnight of July 27, 1794. The streets around the City Hall were crowded with people ready to be led if Robespierre's friends had been alert, but there was no leader. The Mountain, the Jacobins, the Commune, and the National Guards were still loyal, but there was no real effort made to unite them against the Convention and the committee. In truth, Robespierre had "no organized force; his partisans, though numerous, were not enlisted and incorporated."

The day had been one of intense heat; in fact,

EXTRAIT

DU REGISTRE DES ARRÊTÉS

DU COMITÉ DE SALUT PUBLIC

DE LA CONVENTION NATIONALE,

Du douzième jour de Prairial l'an deuxième de la République française une et indivisible.

Le Comité de Salut Public renvoie les Citoyens Avi et Duhil aux Représentans du Peuple à l'armée d'Italie qui sont autorisés à les continuer dans leurs fonctions s'ils le jugent convenable.

Signé au Registre Robespierre, Couthon, Billaud-Varenne, Collot-d'Herbois, Cabrieur Carnot, R. Lindet et B. Barere.

Pour Extrait Conforme

Couthon

Robespierre

Collot-d'Herbois

EXTRACT FROM THE REGISTRY OF THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY

From the original in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.

during Thermidor and the greater part of the preceding month, the thermometer had not fallen even in the cool hours of the night below 65°. In the daytime, under the scorching rays of the sun, men and horses fell dead in the street; such a period of oppressive and continued heat had not occurred within the memory of the oldest inhabitant.

On the night in question the clouds had been gathering since sunset, and at last a terrific storm broke over the city, a heavy rain began to fall, accompanied by lightning and thunder, and the crowd soon scattered, running for shelter in every direction. So dissolved the last hope of Robespierre. He and his companions had listened to the shouts outside and so long as they continued there seemed to be a chance for rescue, but now all was silent. Suddenly through the corridor leading to the room in which the prisoners were confined, were heard approaching footsteps and the clinking of arms. The accused looked at one another, and each face revealed the same thought without the utterance of a word. "Kill me," said St. Just to Lebas. "I have something else to do," was the reply, and Lebas shot himself dead. Couthon tried to open his veins. Coffinhal and the younger Robespierre leaped from the windows, the latter breaking his leg in the fall to the ground.

It will, perhaps, always be a mooted question as to whether or not Robespierre shot himself; but the commonly accepted account is that Bourdon, leading a squad of soldiers, entered the

room, pointed at Robespierre and said, "That is the man," whereupon a *gendarme* named Méda raised his gun, took deliberate aim, and fired. The wound inflicted was not fatal, but the lower jaw was broken and blood spurted over a paper lying on the table upon which Robespierre had just written the first two letters of his name, "Ro." It was the call his friends had persuaded him to sign and bore the names of Payan, Legrand, Louvet, and Lerebours. "Brothers and friends, the country is in imminent danger," the proclamation read. "The wicked have mastered the Convention where they hold in chains the virtuous Robespierre. To arms! To arms! Let us not lose the fruits of the 18th of August and the 2nd of June. Death to the traitors!" Had this spirited appeal been published, it might have had a hearty response and have saved the day; but, at this crucial point in his career, the nerve of Robespierre as usual failed him, and he hesitated to act at a time when promptitude was the essence of success. The influence of that very system of terror which he had helped to inaugurate and maintain seemed now, that he had fallen under its spell, to disable him as much as it did any of the victims that had heretofore perished beneath its cruel sway.

Towards morning Robespierre was carried on a litter into another room and was laid upon a table, with his head resting at first on the back of a chair and afterwards on a box containing samples of mouldy army bread. A bloody handkerchief bound round his head, held his jaw

in place. One cheek, his forehead and his eyes were all that could be seen of his face. He had on a blue coat — the same that he wore at the Festival of the Supreme Being, nankeen breeches, and white stockings, the latter in the struggle having fallen about his heels.

The committee sent a surgeon to dress the wounds. St. Just, brave and loyal to the last, stood at the side of his friend, watched over him tenderly, and ministered to his wants. Couthon was weak from loss of blood and Augustin Robespierre suffered untold agony with his broken leg. Henriot, half drunk, had taken refuge in a sewer, but, fished out by the guard, was sent to the Town Hall. Coffinhal escaped after his leap from the window, but was arrested a few days afterwards and sent to the scaffold. Lerebours successfully avoided pursuit and reached Switzerland in safety.

While Robespierre was lying on the table, his enemies came into the room and twitted him; even the clerks from the adjoining offices flocked around him, mocked him in his agony, and pricked him with the points of their penknives. Legendre, the butcher, insensate as the ox he slaughtered, scoffed at the man whose mere glance, in the past, could have made him cower. "Ha! ha!" he cried. "You for whom the Republic was not vast enough are now content with a few feet of table space." "*Tais toi, massacruer des boeufs*"—"Silence, butcher of bullocks," was the reply.

When the blood gathered in his throat, Robes-

pierre wiped his mouth on the sheepskin that formed the flap of a holster for a brace of pistols. By a singular coincidence the case bore the inscription: "The Great Monarch; Lecourt, Maker to the King." An on-looker gave him some sheets of paper to wipe the blood from his lips, and he thanked him saying: "*Je vous remercie, Monsieur.*" Strangely enough, in his last moments he renounced the Jacobin form of speech to which he had been accustomed and which he had assiduously used since its introduction.

Some one, moved by sympathy, no doubt, placed at his side a cup of vinegar and a sponge, and with these he occasionally moistened his lips which were now swollen and feverish. He kept his eyes closed and not a word escaped him; he suffered with the fortitude of a Stoic.

Barras states, in his Memoirs, that an attendant surgeon, having picked up some of Robespierre's teeth that had fallen to the floor, placed them on the table, when "a gunner pounced upon them and exclaimed: "You scoundrel, I will keep these as a monument of execration."

At three o'clock in the afternoon all the prisoners were taken before the Revolutionary Tribunal. Robespierre, having already been declared an outlaw, was given short shrift, and was condemned without a hearing.

It was about seven o'clock in the evening of 10th Thermidor, in the year second of the Re-

public, using the language of the Revolution, which date in the Christian calendar was July 28, 1794, when the carts containing the prisoners started for the scaffold. A more grewsome, wretched lot of men was never carried to execution. There were the younger Robespierre, unable to stand or sit upright because of his broken limb; Couthon, a paralytic, his garments covered with the blood that had oozed from his opened veins; Henriot, his face besmeared with gore and his shirt soiled with the mud of the sewer in which he had concealed himself; and the great Robespierre, his head tied up in a bandage to hold his broken jaw in position, his clothing soaked with blood. These made up so miserable a group of mortals that they ought to have induced pity in the hearts of even the merciless.

The streets were thronged; every door, window, and balcony was filled with spectators; even the trees and the roofs of houses were utilized.

The people were in a merry mood, as was evinced by the clapping of hands and the shouts of exultation. Women especially were enthusiastic in their demonstrations. Every foot of the way the condemned were assailed with cries of: "Down with the tyrant!"

Only a short time before this scene, Robespierre had been the most powerful man in France with the sceptre of supreme authority all but within his reach; now, fallen and degraded, suffering the greatest agony, carted like a common culprit to the scaffold, he was mocked and reviled

by the very people whose destiny would have been in his hands had he possessed that resolution that was required to usurp the power.

Gendarmes, riding their horses close to the tumbril, with their sabres would point out Robespierre to the people. He was leaning against the side of the cart, bound to it by cords to enable him to stand upright, quietly enduring the pain from his wound, which was greatly increased by the jolting of the vehicle over the rough surface of the highway. The rue St. Honoré, which led from the Palais de Justice to the Place de la Revolution, was paved with large irregular stones. The tumbril was anything but an easy conveyance. It consisted of a floor of planks, without springs, on two high wheels; its sides were wider at the top than at the bottom, like a hay cart; there was no covering above, the prisoners being exposed to the public view; the cart was drawn by two Normandy grays, the executioner's assistants leading the horses by the bridles.

"Kill him! Kill him!" was the cry of the hags that followed the cart. The procession stopped in front of the house of Duplay, the carpenter, where Robespierre had his lodgings. The premises were closed and empty, for the father, the mother, and the children were all under arrest. At this point "a group of women danced around the bier of him whose chariot wheels they would have dragged the day before over a thousand victims." A young man, who had procured a bucket of blood from a neighboring slaughter

pen, then proceeded to besmear the front of the dwelling with a broom, to the great delight of the crowd. One woman jumped upon the side of the cart, struck Robespierre a blow in the face, and then invoked the vengeance of heaven upon the tyrant. "Down to hell," she cried, "with the curses of all the mothers of France." At this insult and terrible malediction he simply shrugged his shoulders. It was the only sign of notice of his surroundings that he made on his way to death.

At a cross street the carts stopped to give the funeral of Madame Aigné the right of way. She had killed herself the day before from fear of Robespierre, so it was rumored.

The guillotine was reached at last, and the wounded were carried from the tumbrils to the foot of the steps leading to the platform. One by one they went to execution, not one of them flinching. St. Just spoke but a single word and that was farewell to his friend and master.

As Robespierre stood waiting to be bound to the plank, Samson, the executioner, rudely snatched the bandage from his face, the jaw fell and the pain was so great that he uttered a piercing cry of anguish. It was the dying shriek of the Revolution.

Robespierre was but thirty-six years of age at the time of his death. He was buried in the grave that held the remains of Louis XVI. By the irony of fate, royalist and revolutionist at last mingled their ashes in the same tomb; both were brought to the one level by the ruthless

destroyer, Death, within whose realm there are no distinctions.

The execution of Robespierre may be described as the closing scene in the dreadful tragedy of the "Reign of Terror." After the guillotine ceased its work, the multitude dispersed, each citizen on the way to his home wondering the while what would be the next act in the drama.

A lovely summer night came on apace, through the gathering shadows, and fell softly on the city. Paris, though not realizing it at the time, was passing out of her agony.

CHAPTER XXXI

REACTION AFTER THE DEATH OF ROBESPIERRE — COLLOT D'HERBOIS, BILLAUD-VARENNES, VADIER, AND BARÈRE TRIED AND CONVICTED — UPRISING OF THE 20TH OF MAY, 1795 — MASSACRE OF FERAUD — TRIAL, CONVICTION, AND SUICIDE OF ROMME AND HIS COMPANIONS — CONSTITUTION OF 1795 — ROBESPIERRE AS COMPARED WITH HIS CONTEMPORARIES — HOW THE REVOLUTION AFFECTED THE MINDS OF MEN — ITS INFLUENCE AND LESSONS.

For several days after the death of Robespierre, there was no perceptible change in the policy of the government. The streets resounded with the rumbling of the death carts filled as usual with victims. The executions did not diminish in number; they increased. Billaud-Varennes, Collot d'Herbois, and Vadier, representatives of the violent revolutionary spirit, were determined to keep the "Terror" alive, seeming to have no appreciation of the fact that public sentiment was on the turn.

A mighty reaction, however, set in suddenly and the Jacobin rule soon came to an end. "France had awakened from the ghastly dream of the 'Reign of Terror.'" A decree was passed abolishing the Revolutionary Tribunal; the Great

Committee of Public Safety was shorn of its power; the Law of the 22nd Prairial was repealed. The harsh and cruel features of the Revolution that had characterized its system of terror were gradually obliterated.

Lacretelle says: "In the space of eight or ten days after the fall of Robespierre, out of ten thousand suspected persons not one remained in the prisons of Paris." All the parties in hiding came forth, the Girondins and even the royalists and priests returned. The churches began to throw open their doors and religious worship was resumed, although it was not until May, 1795, that a decree was passed authorizing the public exercise of the Catholic religion.

So sudden was the change in sentiment and conditions that the ultra-revolutionists were stunned. Billaud could hardly realize what had taken place and at a meeting of the Jacobins declared: "The lion is only slumbering, but when aroused his awakening will be terrible." In a measure he was right, for the mobs did gather later and threaten the public peace; but, having no leaders, they were soon scattered.

Crowds of young men calling themselves the "Gilded Youth," belonging to the middle classes, paraded through the streets singing an inspiring song called *"Reveil du Peuple."* To distinguish themselves from the Jacobins, "they wore coats that were square and open-breasted, their shoes were very low in the instep, and their hair hanging down on each side was bound up behind in tresses. They were armed with short sticks,

leaded like bludgeons." Whenever they met a group of Jacobins there was a hand-to-hand conflict. A great crowd of these young men marched out of the Palais Royal on the 19th of Brumaire (November 9th), 1794, passed along the rue St. Honoré, and proceeded to the hall of the Jacobins where the society was in session. The crowd outside increased every minute and assailed with insult and derision the members of the association; at last they resorted to more violent measures, throwing stones and breaking the windows. The women from the slums, the "Furies" of the Revolution, who had crowded the galleries, rushed out of the building in terror to avoid the shower of missiles. Upon reaching the street many of them were seized by the young men and roughly handled; in some instances publicly and indecently whipped, "which flagellation," says Scott, "might excellently suit their merits but which shows that the young associates for maintaining order were not sufficiently aristocratic to be under the absolute restraints imposed by the rules of chivalry." Many of the women returned to the hall in great fright, with torn clothing and disheveled hair and called upon the Jacobins to resent the insults they had suffered. Their appeals met with a ready response and the Jacobins, led by a man of courage named Duhem, sallied out of the hall and at once a hand-to-hand conflict took place. The Jacobins, greatly outnumbered, were driven back into the building; but they took with them as prisoners several of the Gilded Youth. It was hours be-

fore peace was restored and then only after members of the Convention, by earnest appeals, induced the young men to disperse upon the promise that their companions should be released. The next day the hall was closed, and the keys deposited in the office of the secretary of the Committee of Public Safety. The Club of the Jacobins had ended its mission. "Within its walls," says Allison, "all the great changes of the Revolution had been prepared and all its principal scenes rehearsed; from its energy the triumph of the democracy had sprung, and from its activity its destruction arose."

The reaction was so strong that the busts of Marat and Lepelletier were thrown down and destroyed. The body of Marat was taken from the Pantheon, dragged at the end of a rope through the streets, and cast into a sewer.

Collot d'Herbois, Billaud-Varennes, Vadier, and Barère were tried, convicted, and sentenced to transportation. Barère contrived to be left behind on the island of Oleron when his colleagues sailed for Cayenne, "which was the first time," Boursault wittily remarks, "that he ever failed to sail with the wind."

During the trial of these men an insurrection was attempted, but the substantial citizens rallied to the aid of the Convention and the mob was dispersed.

"All Paris," exclaimed Legendre, addressing the Convention, "demands of you the justly merited punishment of Fouquier Tinville." So in response to public demand this wanton prose-

cutor of the pleas, who had made justice a travesty in what should have been her own sanctuary, was convicted and guillotined.

Carrier, the butcher of Nantes, one of the cruelest men of that period, was tried and sentenced to death. One after another the fiends of the Revolution paid the penalty for their crimes.

Robespierre was right when he said he believed the time had come to put an end to the "Reign of Terror," that its further continuance meant a war of extermination. His death produced the reaction necessary to stop the "Terror," but it took a different direction from that it would have taken had he still lived.

A great revulsion of feeling followed his execution. France, escaping from the influence of his puritanism, weary of the gloom that prevailed during the *régime* of this virtuous dictator, plunged into gayety and dissipation. A change in the dress of both men and women took place. The fashionable *salons* began to hold receptions. The "Ball of the Victims" was one of the most brilliant and exclusive assemblies and was characteristic of the times. The qualification for attendance upon the ball was the loss of a near relative by the guillotine. Nothing so testifies to the great change in public sentiment as the holding of these assemblies. In the "Reign of Terror" they would not have been tolerated for a moment.

Badges of mourning were worn openly by the royalists for relatives who had been guillotined.

In the army a temporary despondency was

created by the fall of Robespierre. The soldiers were republicans and they feared the reaction meant a return to the monarchy. Robespierre had been to them the exponent and representative of the democratic principles for which they had fought. His death, however, did not stop the victories. The campaigns of 1794 and 1795 were most glorious for the French arms. Young Bonaparte in Italy was beginning that phenomenal career that was to dazzle all Europe.

The democratic Constitution of 1793, which had been adopted, was now ignored and the Convention was at work framing a new instrument.

The faubourgs of Saint Antoine and Saint Marceau were still restless and on the 20th of May, 1795, the democrats organized another uprising. Mobs poured out of the sections bearing banners upon which were inscribed the words, "Bread!" and "The Constitution of 1793." The hall of the Convention was invaded. A swarm of women crowded into the galleries shouting: "Bread! bread!" The deputies, forced out of their seats, retired to the upper benches while the *gendarmes* formed a line around them for protection. The crowd outside increased every moment and drunkenness added to their frenzy; wild howlings and imprecations filled the air. Paris was once more in the possession of the mob. The hall of the Convention was crowded almost to suffocation and the business of the session suspended.

André Dumont, the presiding officer, enjoined all good citizens to withdraw, but he was reviled

and threatened with death. Presently a troop of soldiers and a great body of young men, armed with postboys' whips, forced their way into the galleries and drove the disorderly women out into the streets amidst the shouts of the spectators; but, instead of restoring order, this only increased the tumult and the crowd outside, angered at the scourging and expulsion of the women, pressed into the hall, breaking down all resistance.

Feraud, a young and an intrepid deputy, appealed to the mob to restrain their violence; but he was thrown to the ground, trampled under foot, and his body kicked out into the street. Shortly afterwards a rioter carried into the hall the head of Feraud on a pike. Boissy d'Anglas, who had succeeded Dumont as presiding officer, remained calm and immovable during all the excitement, and when the wretch who carried the head of the dead deputy on a pike pushed it into the face of Boissy d'Anglas, the latter coolly took off his hat and bowed gravely as if paying respect to the dead. For six hours continuously the president occupied the chair, subjected almost every minute to insult and derision.

It was nine o'clock at night when the mob, still retaining possession of the hall, compelled a number of the deputies to hold a session. Motions were made at the suggestion of the mob and several decrees were passed, among them one abolishing the existing government and another providing for the election of a new legislature. Romme was the deputy who became the

spokesman for the mob and directed the proceedings of this Rump Convention.

According to Mignet, this was one of the most terrible days of the Revolution. Never before had the mob so completely taken possession of the Convention and dictated legislation. But such disorders were no longer so formidable as they had once been, because not so lasting. The supremacy of the law asserted itself at once.

The murderer of Feraud was identified and arrested, but was subsequently rescued by the mob. A number of the members of the Convention who had acted with the mob in passing the decrees were arrested and six were convicted. These were Romme, Soubrany, Doroi, Duquesnoi, Goryon, and Bourbotte.

It was charged that these men had instigated the insurrection and that the part they took in the proceedings in the hall of the Convention had been previously arranged, but there was no substantial proof of such a plot and they positively denied any knowledge of such a plan.

The Duchess d'Abrantes, in her Memoirs, says of these men: "They exhibited the most admirable fortitude, feeling, and patriotism. The conduct of Romme in particular is said to have been sublime. After sentence was imposed upon them they accepted their fate without a murmur. They handed to their friends standing near by souvenirs and letters to be delivered to their families. On descending the staircase Romme suddenly drew from his pocket a penknife or a small

poniard and without a moment's hesitation plunged it into his heart; he then handed it to Goryon who, after using it in like manner, passed it on to Duquesnoi. All three of these men died almost immediately. The others who also used the poniard, succeeded only in wounding themselves and, while in their death throes, were carried to the scaffold and beheaded. With them died the party of the Mountaineers. There were few spectators at the execution; the people were recovering their sensibility and no longer looked with calmness upon scenes so revolting. The fury of the Revolution had subsided. Shortly after this the sections were disarmed.

A new class of men had now come to the front, many of them bankers and stock brokers. Speculation ran rife; the Bourse and the Stock Exchange opened their doors; the law of the Maximum was repealed; bread stuffs were cornered and immense fortunes were thus made. Paris began to assume the appearance that distinguished her in the days of the old *régime*. On every side there was seen an ostentatious display of wealth.

"In the midst of the wreck of ancient opulence, modern wealth began to display its luxury," writes Lacretelle, "and the riches of the bankers and those who had made fortunes in the Revolution began to shine with unprecedented lustre. Splendid hotels, sumptuously furnished in the Grecian taste, were embellished by magnificent *fêtes*."

Of course, during this period many conspira-

cies were hatched to restore the Bourbon *régime*, but the people were not yet willing to return to a monarchy.

On the 22nd of August, 1795, the Convention decreed the new Constitution. It was the work of the moderate republicans. Having witnessed the inefficiency and danger of a single legislative body, which acted without any restraining influence and which was often swayed by popular opinion and passion, the Convention divided the legislative power under the new Constitution into two bodies: a Council of Ancients and a Council of Five Hundred. The executive power was vested in a Directory, consisting of five members chosen by the two chambers. This number was subsequently reduced to three.

The Constitution was too aristocratic in some of its features to meet the approval of the radicals and on the 5th of October, 1795, a mob of 40,000 men marched out of the seditious faubourgs against the Convention, which was holding its sessions in the Tuileries. It was planned to be a repetition of the memorable 10th of August, 1792,[1] when the monarchy was overthrown; but the conditions were not at this time as they had been then. Napoleon Bonaparte had posted the artillery, and when he opened fire he scattered the rabble to the four winds.

After much contention the Convention adjourned October 26, 1795, amidst cries of "Long live the Republic." The newly organized government under the new Constitution assumed

[1] See "Danton and the French Revolution," p. 238.

control October 27, 1795. It lasted until November 9, 1799, when Napoleon overthrew the Directory, which event marks the end of what is distinctively called the French Revolution.

In so far as the results it originally desired to attain were concerned, the Revolution was a failure. It at last wore itself out and fell exhausted from its excess of energy. The men who had struggled so hard to reach their ideals had failed in their purpose, but they had, nevertheless, improved the social and political conditions. They had destroyed abuses, abolished privileges, and restricted the absolutism of the king. They had not regenerated the world as they had hoped to do, but they had broken down systems of tyranny and had emancipated France from thraldom and feudalism. To effect these results they had been obliged to combat the despotism of ages, a despotism firmly seated and deeply rooted; the struggle had been impassioned and intense. From a simple effort to effect reform the Revolution became a raging torrent and the men who thought they directed its course were carried along helplessly on its surface or drowned in its depths. It was a power, a force, separate and distinct in itself, and men were but its instruments. The Revolution was war in its worst phase.

In judging the men of those times, if we desire to be fair, we must consider the extraordinary conditions that surrounded them; it would not be just to estimate their characters as we would those of men in a quiet and an orderly period. Through the dark and murky atmosphere of

those days, especially during the "Reign of Terror," all the actors and scenes seem out of proportion when compared with the men and events of other times. "The actors in this fearful drama," says Sardou, "move like beings of some other sphere," and to judge them accurately we cannot separate them from their circumstances nor from the spirit, the motives, and the purposes, of their age.

Robespierre, to be sure, in many respects was an enigma, but perhaps not more incomprehensible than were other men of that epoch. Stripped of the innumerable legends that attach to his career, he appears no worse than any of his colleagues and really better than most of them.

Maillard had been a respectable usher at a court before the Revolution and gave no sign of possessing the brutal character he afterwards developed. Billaud-Varennes, one of the most merciless men in the "Reign of Terror," had been a teacher at the institute of the Oratorians, where he was so beloved by the pupils that he was affectionately called "good father Billaud." Collot d'Herbois had been an actor and would have continued, no doubt, to tear many a passion to tatters, without resorting to anything more violent, had he not been cast to play a leading part in the drama of the Revolution. The boisterous Santerre, leader of the rabble in the faubourg Saint Antoine, had been a benevolent well-to-do brewer. The Marquis St. Huruge was naturally kindly in disposition; "his heart was not cruel, but his brain was disturbed." Even

COLLOT D'HERBOIS

From an engraving in the collection of William J. Latta, Esq.
After a painting by Raffet

Legendre, the butcher, is said to have been good in his lucid intervals. Marat, a retired physician, had been devoted to scientific study and research. Fouquier Tinville, the ruthless public prosecutor, had been a reputable lawyer. Even Carrier, "who might have summoned hell to match his cruelty without a demon venturing to answer his challenge," had been a respectable though an obscure attorney; and so we might extend the list indefinitely.

The strong wine of the Revolution intoxicated them; it inflamed their minds; it poisoned their blood. Their natures seemed to undergo a complete transformation.

The duration of the Revolution, from the meeting of the States-General to the death of Robespierre, covered a period of only five years; but in that short space of time changes were wrought that centuries could not have effected under ordinary conditions. Never in the history of the world had there been a period so exceptional. Such an eruption of ideas, theories, policies, purposes, catastrophies, crimes, and virtues mankind had never witnessed. The Revolution was a theatre for the display of genius, talents, power, hatred, cruelty, generosity, ambition, and every phase of human passion. Doctrines, dogmas, creeds, codes, vows, obligations, were cast aside; even Christianity no longer directed and influenced human conduct. The Revolution itself became a dogma; a faith to which all things had to yield. No wonder that the minds of men were unbalanced, that society was thrown topsy-turvy,

and that human nature underwent a change.

The people became not only intolerant and fanatical, but cruel in venting their hatred. For centuries, and especially during the Bourbon *régime,* under a system of oppression and tyranny they had been nursing their wrath and at last the day arrived to avenge the continued and heartless wrongs they had suffered. Heretofore their hatred had been expressed only in looks and whispers, and their complaints, if they dared to utter them aloud, were couched in humble and supplicatory terms; but the Revolution spoke the people's wrath in trumpet tones; it was in itself the expression of their anger. Men and events were reflected in each other; how could it have been otherwise? The worst passions of the human heart were aroused by the remembrance of past wrongs.

The French Revolution was the remonstrance of the oppressed against the tyranny of ages. Although its violence and cruelty prevented the immediate securing of the benefits it desired to obtain, its influence will last for all time, and unto the latest generations mankind will be the recipient of its blessings and will be warned and instructed by its many lessons.

INDEX

INDEX

A

Abbaye, prison for soldiers, 96
Absolutists, characteristics of, 47
Academie Français, prize of, 138
Accounts Rendered, celebrated, 142
Adelaide, daughter of Louis XV, 145
Alençon, 192
Allison, 321
America, colonies in, 67; Rochambeau in, 186; United States of, 237
American, Congress, 221, 259; Revolution, 171
Americans, 205, 215
Amiens, Academy of, 50
Angely, d', R. de Saint Jean, 175
Anglas, d', Boissy, 379
Arcis-sur-Aube, home of Danton, 289, 290, 348
Argot, 36
Arny-le-duc, aunts of king stopped at, 147
Arras, R's. farms near, 19; R's. birthplace, 49; Bishop of, 50; a maiden of, 54; 157, 239, 308
Artois, 49, 55, 56, 162, 205
Athens, Athenians, 36
Augustin, R's. brother, went to scaffold with him, 49
Austria, 223
Austrians, 151, 253
Assembly, R. distinguished member, 16; sessions, 19; in mourning for Franklin, 20; dissolution of, 25; R. an instrument for much good and much evil, 31; not noticed at first, 32; a thorough worker in, 47; nobles and clericals invited, 91; ordered to disperse, 91; declares members inviolable, 93; 109, 110, 113; decree of, 114; Jacobins influential, 115, 116; creates departments, 118; martial law, 123; proclaims toleration, 126; king visits,

127; new order, 130; in confusion, 131; attitude toward church, 131; 132, 134, 136, 143, 144; in conclave, 146; Menou's speech, 147; interruptions, 154; 161; lost credit, 162; appeals for republic, 166; sweeping reforms, 168; in consternation, 169; 176, 179; honors La Fayette, 183; 184, 185, 196; revision, 208; drawing to close, 208; king accepts constitution, 210; deputies and king, 211; 212, 213, 218, 220, 221; Girondins in, 225; adjournment, 233; National-Constituent, 234; October 1791, 234; 237; member of National, 236; commissioners, 251; moved to Paris, 257; halls occupied by, 258; tribune of, 259; 312, 322

B

Bailly, president, 95; conspiracy to kill, 27; 181
Barbaroux, leading Girondin, 239; supports Louvet, 244; 281
Barère, R. at dinner with, 23; mouthpiece of, 190; 207, 244; Stephens on, 245; epigram, 246; report by, 275; memoirs, 278; 349, 376
Barnave, disciple of Mounier, 92; 156; full name, 184; 185, 209, 210, 216
Barras, memoirs, 27; 295; enemy of R., 307; 351, 352
Bastile, fall of, 79; symbol of arbitrary power, 100; commandant of, 103; mob, 112; celebration of fall, 131; 133, 143; Voltaire in, 74; Voltaire's coffin at, 175; 214
Batz, Baron de, 340
Baudin, 156, 157
Beauharnais, memoirs, 41, 42
Beaumarchais, comedies of, 68
Beauregard, 298
Belgium, 149; campaign in, 253; 357
Bellevue, 145, 146
Bicêtre, 96
Billaud-Varennes, 38, 304, 305, 349, 351, 353, 361, 373, 374, 376, 384
Blanc, Louis, "Royalty no longer," 90; on Louis XVI, 102, 121
Body Guard, 111

Bordeaux, 213, 215, 282, 284, 342, 352
Bossuet, 220, 318
Bouillé, suppressed mutiny, 136; honored, 136
Bourbon, princes, 72; intolerant, 82; 111, 235, 385
Bourdalone, 220, 320
Bozé, 249
Brissot, "no more king," 166; editor, 198; Brissotins, 214; 215, 216, 219, 223; dictatorship, 240; 281
Brittany, massacre in, 131; sword of, 132
Broglie, Marshal, 186
Brunswick, Duke of, issues proclamation, 229
Brussels, emperor and king at, 162; 253
Buckle, H. T., 72
Burke, 221
Buzot, 165, 183

C

Caen, 284
Ça ira, 124, 205, 206
Cambon, 355, 357
Campan, Madame, plot for king's escape, 129; memoirs, 150; destroyed documents, 250
Capet, 133
Capital, 214, 237
Carmagnole, 205, 206, 207, 298
Carnot, 38, 296, 349, 357
Carra, 197
Carrault, Jacqueline, mother of R., 50
Carrier, 259; butcher of Nantes, 377
Carrousel, 347
Castries, Duke de, duel, 187; Mademoiselle de, 188
Catharine Theot, 336, 338
Champ de Mars, meeting at, 180; fusillade of, 181; 182, 183, 326, 327
Champfort, 101
Charles I, 248
Charles X, Count d' Artois, 226
Charlotte, R's sister, 19, 40
Chateaubriand, 116

Chaumette, editor, 192; full name, 193
Chenier, Joseph, 151; hymn, 177
Christendom, 192
Christian, faith, 193, 321; religion, 73
Christianity, ministers of, 317, 385
Christmas, 249
Church, the, princes of, 61; no moral influence, 66; the primitive, 89; lands confiscated, 114; rapacity of, 125; R. on confiscation, 126; made subservient, 130; reforms in, 168; abuses in, 174; 177, 183; crown and the, 271; 319, 320, 321, 322, 329
Clamart, quarries of, 196
Coblentz, *emigrés* at, 162, 222, 230
Colbert, eulogy on, 138
College, of Louis le Grand, 50, 55; of Jesuits, 195; of Oratorians, 294
Colonies, American, 142
Committee of General Safety, 203, 245
Commune, 308
Condé, fugitive, 162; prince of, 226, 227
Condorcet, journalist, 195; searched, 197; on R., 228
Constantinople, capture of, 73
Constitution, basis of a, 109; "Friends of the," 114; labors on, 123; construction, 127; king loyal to, 127; oath of allegiance, 130, 168; revision, 208; 209, 210, 211, 223, 224, 226, 227; of 1791, 234; of the year II, 260, 261; acceptance of, 267; American, 283; of 1793, 378, 382
Convention, declaration of, 75; accepts constitution, 104; 116, 135, 169; deputies to, 170; 196; new, 213, 220; last Congress, 233; strife in, 234; important move in, 235; old leaders, 236; assembling of, 237; charges against R., 240; in uproar, 241; Louvet's speech, 242; contempt of, 244; R. addressing, 248; decree of, 254, 255; expulsion of Girondins, 256; changed quarters, 257; 258, 259; Jacobins in, 262; 263, 264; honors Marat, 267; 268, 270, 271; orders levy, 273; 274, 275, 276, 282, 283, 284, 295, 296, 298, 312, 313; on Christian religion, 318; 324, 326, 327, 328, 329, 331, 338, 341, 346, 349; R.'s oration in, 355; 357, 358, 360, 376; invaded by women, 378; Rump ses-

sion, 380, 381; decreed new constitution, 382; adjourned, 382

D

D'Alembert, 195
Danton, epigrammatic, 30; after death of, 42; Cordeliers, 114; 141; at Jacobins', 161; charges against La Fayette, 161; "peace of slavery," 167; successor of Louis, 167; generosity of, 184; speeches, 199, 221; 230; an inspiration, 231; connection with Dumouriez, 251; La Source, 252; admiration for Girondins, 255; humiliated, 284; 288, 290; declares for clemency, 290; addresses Convention, 291; given fraternal embrace, 292; 301; outspoken, 302; collision with R., 303; "found guilty without hearing," 304; on the scaffold, sacrificed, 305; 308; 10th of August, 311; 314, 332, 335; supreme, 348; date of death, 349; Dantonists, 300; 305, 351, 354
D'Aumont, 128
David, artist of Revolution, 257, 323, 361
Day of Black Breeches, 151, 229
Day of the Daggers, 149
De Flesselles, 103
De Launy, commandant of Bastile, 103
Descartes, 177
Desmoulins, Camille, R.'s schoolmate, 16; precipitates capture of Bastile, 96; calls to arms, 99; 133; on Théroigne's eloquence, 150; victims of, 154; journalist, 190; able articles by, 289; 296, 300
Diamond necklace, affair of, 68
Directory, 38
Dom Gerl, 336, 337, 338
Draper, 321
Drouet, recognizes king, 159
Du Barry, Madame, 287
Dubois, prelate, 320
Du Chatelet, colonel, 96, 169
Duchesse d'Abrantes, 22; memoirs, 380
Dumas, judge, 345, 346
Dumouriez, wears red cap, 22; victory at Jemappes, 251;

designs of, 252; plans discovered, 253; 255; warning to Girondins, 256; 290
Duplay, R.'s landlord, 18, 19; a Jacobin, 20; Madame and daughter, 22; dwelling of, 182, 183
Duport, leader of Feuillants, 34; 156, 184, 209

E

Echerolles, M'lle des, 317
Eléonoré, daughter of Duplay, 20; R. said to have affection for, 54
Encyclopedia, articles in, 195
England, government, 71, 101; Magna Charta, 110; war with, 142; refuge in, 150; Franklin in, 170; Paine, 172; coalition, 254; furnished subsidies, 254; 280, 284
English constitution, 92; reference to French troops, 206; nation, 294; 312; government, 71, 101, 314
Europe, conspiracy, 222; crowned heads, 222; every throne in, 247; armies in motion, 257

F

Fargeau, deputy, assassinated, 261
Father Duchesne, 194
Fauchet, publisher, 198
Favras, Marquis de, hanged, 127, 128
Fenelon, 62, 318
Ferrand, 379, 380
Festival, 131, 132, 133, 323, 327, 329, 330, 331
Feuillants, 154; organizers, 183; minority elected, 189
Flanders, 150
Fléchier, 220, 320
Flemish capital, 253
Fleury, 345
Forum, 214
Fouché, 351, 352, 359
Foulon, hated and detested, 103, 104; seized by mob, 105; hanged, 106
Fouquier Tinville, 280, 338, 346, 376
Fox, C. J. 101

France, constitution of, 37; 47; monarchy in, 59; a great hospital, 62; court of, 65; rejoiced in America's success, 68; Freemasonry in, 68; oppressed for centuries, 70; prior to Revolution, 71; influence of Revolution, 75; cold winter, 88, 89; monarch in, 102; 109, 110; Jacobins in, 114; provinces of, 118; conditions in, 121; threats from Rome, 126; hanging in, 128; financier in, 140; needed a statesman, 141; treasury of, 142, 143; 152; under arms, 162; 166; families in, 187; 195, 204, 205; history of, 208; invasion of, 218, 220, 222; law of nations, 222, 223; glory of, 24; on fire, 230, 231; Marat and dictatorship, 239; 242; R.'s advice, 254; formidable enemy of, 254; 265, 267; coalition against, 272; 275, 276, 279, 281, 285, 298; saved from Brunswick, 307; 308, 312, 313, 321, 334, 335, 342, 369, 377, 383

François, 123

Franklin, Benjamin, on Paine, 170, 171; ambassador, 205; bust of, 273

Franks, 59, 211, 213, 214

Frederick the Great, 174

French, people, 37; attached to king, 62, 68; Philip le Bel convened congress, 79; 205, 206, 207; language, 220; laws, 223; victories, 224; princes, 230; historians, 242; 273, 275, 276, 325; emperor of, 335; 378

G

Gallia, 59

Garat, minister of Interior, 281, 351

Gaudet, 218, 219, 249

Gauls, overthrow of, 59

Geneva, birthplace of Necker, 138

Gensonné, 218, 249, 259

Germany, at the gates, 124; petty states, 222; emperor, 229

Gibbon, 334

Gilded Youth, 374, 375

Girondins, execution of, 36; downfall of, 152; condemnation of, 190; leader of, 198; 203, 213, 214, 218, 219; favor war, 222; R. on, 224, 225, 226; ministers dismissed,

229; faction of, 232; policies of, 237; in the Convention, 237; not a political party, 237; councils of 238; public suspicious, 239; deputies from Marseilles, 240; cowardice of, 250, 252; Dumouriez favorite with, 253; orators, 254; proceedings against Marat, 256, 257; protest, 263; undoing of, 264; accusations, 266; after expulsion, 270, 271; no defense, 280; fortitude of, 281; 282, 283, 284, 288, 351; return of, 374
Gobel, archbishop, 317, 318
Goddess of Reason, 312
Grasse, 218
Great Britain, 312
Great Committee, 235, 273, 275, 293, 306, 340, 342, 348, 349, 351, 357, 358, 376
Guillotine, 128, 246, 247, 340, 345, 346, 347, 372

H

Helvetius, Madame, *salon* of, 139
Hébert, editor, 192; influence of, 193; imitation, 195; the infamous, 236; 299, 300; Hébertists, 203
Herbois, d', Collot, 253; waylaid, 314; 346, 349; Nero of Lyons, 351; 373, 376, 384
Henry IV, coffin of, 299
Holy of Holies, 298
Home Guard, 144
Hotel de Ville, 102
Hugo, Victor, 272, 313

I

Indulgents, the, 248
Inisdale, d', arranged for escape of king, 128; failure, 129
Ireland, R.'s family originated in, 49
Isnard, 216, 218

J

Jacobins, R. at meeting of, 16; resolutions by, 38; leading organization, 113; nobles and men of distinction attended meetings, 113, 114; 1,200 societies, 114; *"Societé Des,"*

115, 116; Théroigne invited by, 151; 154; La Fayette at, 161; 167; Paine offended the, 172; committee of the, 180; 187; leaders, 190; 203, 206, 213, 218; organ of, 225; extremes, 225; R.'s speeches in, 237; real democracy, 238; counter charges, 280; R. defends the, 243; 244; charge against Roland, 249; at trial, 260; impending danger, 262; 263, 264; memorial services, 266; honors to Marat, 267; 268, 269, 293, 300; R. leader of, 308; 312, 314, 317, 341; rule at an end, 373, 374; mission closed, 376
Jacquerie, at work, 135
Jefferson, Thomas, 171
Jeffreys, George, Lord Chancellor, 280
Jones, John Paul, 33
Justin McCarthy, on Robespierre, 55

L

Laclos, 166, 198
L'Admiral, marked R. for assassination, 313; 314, 339, 340
La Fayette, sends key of Bastile to Washington, 102; conspiracy to kill, 127; 132, 140; commander of Guard, 144; 146; mob overtaken by, 148; quieted clamor, 149; envious of Mirabeau, 155; surprised by flight of king, 160; deceived, 161; allayed suspicions, 164; innocence proved, 165; skill of, 180; exiled, 181; withdrew, 183; 187; "loved glory," 199; fresh laurels, 225
Lafiteau, prelate, 320
Lamartine, 151, 264
Lameths, Feuillants, 114; 156; three brothers, 186; Count Charles de, 187; 188, 209, 210
Lasource, speech against Danton, 251
La Vendée, insurrection in, 36; massacres in, 131; 284
Lebas, 326, 364, 365
Lecointre, 359
Legendre, 305, 376
Le Marie, journalist, 194
Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, 74, 326
Liége, 151
Life Guards, courage of, 113

Lindet, Robert, 349
Loire, 342
Loiserolles, General, 344; "I am Loiserolles," 345
Lomenie, nephew of cardinal, 23
Louis XIII, power centred in monarch, 59; convention in reign of, 79
Louis XIV, remarkable character, 59; at Versailles, 120; zenith of power, 173; 220, 320
Louis XV, a voluptuary, 62; de Pompadour, 63; Du Barry, 63; "Well Beloved," 64; government under, 76; warlike measures, 98; coronation, 100; health of, 101; daughters of, 145; 320
Louis XVI, wore red cap, 22; entered Paris, 50; *fêtes* of, 60; named "*Le Desiré*," 64; 65; policy of, 67; might have avoided "Reign of Terror," 72; from bad to worse, 76; before States-General 86; fast and loose, 94; surrender to the people, 102; "Joyous Entry," 112; not in peril, 113; plots to abduct, 127; 128; at *fête*, 132; two aunts of, 145; refused to take advice, 146; safety, 148; flight, 159; recognized and detained, 159, 160; deceptive declarations, 161; 165, 166; successor of, 167; flight fatal to monarchy, 168; defense of, 172; return of, 179; 216, 223; sceptre in hand of, 224; unpopularity of, 226; funds of, 230; 235, 236; "Louis the Last," 247; "Let Louis live," 248; condemned, 248; method of conviction, 250; at trial, 259; abandoned palace, 274; 278, 288; Danton to be regent, 292; 336, 340; grave of, 371
Louis XVIII, 226
Louvet, 241, 242, 244, 281
Lubin, 235, 236
Lyons, 282, 284, 293

M

Macaulay 280
Madonna, 318
Maillard, 384
Malesherbes, 344
Malseigne, at Nancy, 136
Marais, the, lodgings in, 183

Marat, idol of the mob, 25; made a Freemason, 69; fumes at *fête,* 104; appeals to mob, 136; poisoning of Mirabeau, 158; 165; disappeared, 183; journalist, 190, 191; opposed war, 225; 239; attacks on Girondins, 256; proceedings against, 256, 257; stricken down, 265; death of, 266, 267; bust of, 273; 281, 284; day of triumph, 312; 323; body cast in sewer, 376.
Marie Antoinette, 128, 129, 130; at *fête,* 132; 186, 204, 223; at guillotine, 278; 340
Marseillais, 229
Marseillaise, the, 205, 218, 272, 283
Marseilles, Girondin deputies from, 240, 282, 284, 342
Marsh, the, 221, 269
Mascarron, 220, 320
McCarthy, Justin, on Robespierre, 55
Ménage, 257, 258
Menon, 147
Mercier, 206, 254
Metz, Academy of, 52; king goes to, 145
Michelet, 19, 53
Mignet, 333, 380
Minister of Finance, 142
Mirabeau, R. obsequious to, 21; writes to Tallyrand, 79; States-General, 81; deputy from Aix, 84; appeals to clergy, 88; necessary to king, 93; on the Assembly, 110; 140, 144; president of Jacobins, 145; advises Louis, 146, 147; full name, 152; 153; a tremendous worker, 154; "master hand," 156; death of, 156; brief illness, 157; alleged poisoning, 158; 177, 179; redoubtable, 185; speech, 190; 216, 314
Mirabeau the younger, full name, 220; accused, 226; slain, 227

N

Nancy, meeting at, 136
Nantes, 342
Napoleon, on R., 26; "Drouet changed the face of the world," 159; 333, 335, 351; in Italy, 378

National Guard, 144, 146, 176, 187; hats of, 202; 211; Henriot, commander of, 304
Necker, calling States-General, 78; dismissed, leaves France, 98; recalled, 103; purchased grain, 123; the queen, 127; resignation, 138; wife of, 139; reputation of, 140; on R., 141; dismissed, 143; mistrusts Mirabeau, 155
Nicolle, 340
Nivernais, province, 295
Nobility, the, obstinate and selfish, 77; electioneering for States-General, 80; 86; refuse to meet with Third Estate, 86; demand one vote for each Estate, 87; cling to old idols, 93; join commons, 94; in Paris, 148
Normandie, 214
Notables, meeting of, 79

O

Old Bailey, 280
Orient, 71
Orleans, Duke of, 112; letter by, 113; 148, 167; sceptre in hands of, 224

P

Paine, Thomas, deputy from Calais, 170; birth, 170; edited Pennsylvania Magazine, 170; surpassing use of English, 171
Palais Royal, ringing with rumors, 93; meeting of citizens, 96; 97, 261, 268; hot bed, 103; *café* in, 107; 111; gardens of, 117, 146
Panckoucke, 198
Panis, 240, 359
Pantheon, 177
Paris, R.'s return to, 16; 19, 20; mob grows ugly, 78; wild with excitement, 93; new cabinet, 99; tocsin, 99; fall of Bastile, 99; king comes to, 102; Foulon's entry, 104; commune, 106; passports, 111; march to Versailles, 112; population of, 119, 120; various comments, 122–124; celebration in, 131; Necker, 138; *salons* in, 139; R. comes to, 140; in a tumult, 145; king's aunts, 146; king to leave, 148; Théroigne returns to, 151; Mirabeau, as

host in, 153; startled by flight of king, 160; traitors, 162; king brought to, 168; walls of, 169; Paine in, 172; suburb of, 173; Voltaire's body returned to, 175; 190; Hébert comes to, 192; Chaumette in, 193; churches in, 194; colleges in, 195; 204; classes in, 205; college du Plessis in, 215; 219; camp near, 226; 229; threatened, 230; 237, 240; Dumouriez in, 253; Girondins threaten, 254; 255; purlieus of, 256; 257, 262, 267, 268, 269, 270, 272, 282, 284, 295, 297, 298, 314, 372
Parisians, 219, 272
Parliament, the Long, 53; of France, 60; English in reign of Charles I, 90; British, 221; 259, 330
Pennsylvania, letter from R. to Franklin, 56; legislature of, 170; University of, 171
Pétion, 165
Phillips, Wendell, 117
Piedmontese, 207
Pilnitz, 229
Pitt, 254; denounced, 294; traitor paid by, 300
Place de Grève, 105
Place Louis XV, 347
Polignac, Duchess de, 102
Prairial, law of 22nd, 36; 24th, 331; 374
Press, the license of, 190
Provence, 127, 218
Priests, 312
Prudhomme, 193
Prussia, king of, 229
Puritan, 47

Q

Quaker, 215

R

Rebecqui, 240, 244
Reformation, the, in religion, 73
Reformers, 47
Regnault, 339, 340

Reign of Terror, "a means to secure reign of virtue," 38; reports threw blame on R., 43; the days of, 54; preludes to, 103; excesses in, 108; Théroigne in, 152; 153, 168, 233; period known as, 264; 284; Barras in, 307; 330, 334; victims, 342; 343, 351, 352, 353; closing scene, 372; 373, 377, 384

Renaissance, in art, 73

Republic, soul of the, 44; temple to liberty, 157; 169, 217, 219; September 21st, 235; 240, 243, 244; one honest man in, 245; a dethroned king, 247; opposition to, 247; 255, 262, 264, 273; disloyalty to, 303; 307, 309, 312, 314, 329, 356, 358, 382

Reveillon, manufacturer, destruction of factory opens Revolution, 78

Revolution, early days of, 15, 16; R. devoted to, 25; 27; attempts to counteract, 35; stormy years of, 37; R. a leader of, 54; 58, 66; given impetus by Louis XVI, 67; 68; various comments on, 69, 70; caused by suffering, 72, 73, 74; fierce fires of, 92; irresistible, 93; moving drama, 97; 99; cockade of, 102; 103; Michelet on, 108; 110, 111; clubs important, 113; Jacobins, 114; focus of, 117; Paris centre of, 121; reform, 122; appropriates wealth of church, 125; guillotine symbol of, 128; the "White Terror," 131; a halt, 133; literature of, 135; to be crushed out, 136; leaders in, 141; turning point in, 143; National Guard in, 144; 148; Théroigne in, 150; period of, 152; first years of, 153; 154, 156; like a torrent, 157; a different story, 160; "glorious day," 161; 162; retrospective vein, 168; Voltaire in, 175; 177; principles of, 179, 182; opportunities in, 184; 185, 186, 187, 188; journalists of, 191, 192; orators of, 199, 200; songs of, 205, 207; 213, 215, 216, 217, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 226; church enemy of, 229, 230; inspiration, 231; last congress, 233; 245, 246, 257, 258, 260; 10th of August, 263; 266; cradle of, 268; foes of, 270; 271, 273, 282, 283, 285, 286, 287; insatiable, 288; St. Just on, 297; 300, 302; R. embodiment of, 308; scapegoat of, 309; 312, 313, 317, 318, 322, 329, 351, 356, 358; dying shriek, 371; 374, 381, 383, 385, 386

Revolutionary Tribunal, bar of the, 279; of Strasbourg, 295; 310
Richelieu, 59, 79
Right, the, members of, 241
Rights of Man, 185, 260, 276
Robespierre, talents, 15; temperament, 16; personal descriptions of, 17, 18; residence of, 18, 19; at Duplay's, 20; charged with timidity, but self-reliant, 21, 22; red cap at Jacobins,' 22; early a leader, 24; more prominent than Danton, 25; a terror to evil-doers, 26; denounces Barras and Fréron, 27; not a great orator but one of the most distinguished speakers of Revolution, 29, 30; opinions respecting and comments on, 30, 31, 32, 33; stage fright, 34; Duport, the Lameths, and Vergniaud, 34; speech on Barra, 35; on abolishing capital punishment, 36; too visionary, 37; not a man of action, 38; scorned and execrated, 39; opinions respecting, 40, 41, 42, 43; member of Great Committee, 43; lived and died for lofty ideals, 48; full name, 49; schoolmates, 50; portrait as young man shows weak face, 52; favorite authors, 53; Franklin's lightning-rod, 55, 56; "ready to defend the oppressed," 57; 58; elected to States-General, 81; "an ingrate," 82; deputy from Arras, 84; maiden speech, 89; 90, 97, 99; a new era, 110; turns to the clubs, 113; in Jacobin Club, 116; 122; opposes martial law, 123; favors confiscation, 126; 130; at *fête*, 133; 136; first came to Paris, 140, 141; stormy speech, 144; influence among Jacobins, 145; gave warning, 147; 150, 152; under spell, 154; when Mirabeau died, 157, 158; speech on flight of king, 161; 164, 165; civic crowns, 166, "the moment has come," 167; 179, 182, 183, 185, 188; started journal, 190; 196, 199; "loved glory," 200; Robespierreists, 203; forging constitution, 209, 210; at Arras, 211; 212, 215, 217, 221; opposed war, 224, 225; supported veto, 226; "at heart a priest," 226; no part in mob-march, 229; 231; in the background, 232; deputy to States-General, member of National Assembly and National Convention, 233; notable in Assembly, 236; conspiring for dictatorship, 239; as dictator, 240; accused by Lou-

vet, 241; indictment of, 242; signally failed, 243; triumph at Jacobins', 244; 245; execution of Louis a necessity, 248; 250; against war, 254; enemy of Girondins, 256; 263, 266, 269, 270; on government, 280, 282; assailed, 284; 285, 289; calls Desmoulins to account, 290; on charges against Danton, 291, 292; stalwart friends, 293; incessant talker, 296; 298, 299, 301; St. Just, 301; Danton, 302, 303; on guard, 304; could have saved Danton, 305, 306; Danton willing to unite with, 307; head of the Republic, 308; last speech before convention, 309; not responsible for massacres, 310; "all crimes thrown at my door," 311; 312; marked for assassination, 313; in danger, 314; 324; speech at Festival, 325, 326; proclaims a Deity, 327; law of 22nd Prairial, 329; threatening letters, 330; 331, 332; not of heroic mould, 333; 334, 335, 336, 337, 338; attack upon, 339; 340, 341; July 28th, 348; friends in Committee, 349; most prominent man in Republic, 351; overthrow, 352; seeks seclusion, 353; 355; violently assailed, 359; leaves Assembly, 360; "last will and testament," 360; "the blood of Danton," 362; lukewarm friends, 363; in custody, 364; no organized force, 364; Augustin, brother of R., 364; 366; last hope, 365; shot by Méda, 366; enemies mocked him, 367; declared an outlaw, 368; on way to scaffold, 369; R.'s lodgings, 370; struck in face, 371; a piercing cry, 371; after death of, 373; 374, 377; fall of, 378; an enigma, 384

Robespierre, Maximilien Barthélemy François, father of R., 49; died in Munich, 49

Roland, Madame, 20, 165, 183, 195, 212; on R., 225; her *salon*, 238; 264; trial of, 285, 286

Roland, Monsieur, 165

Rome, 58, 59, 122, 214, 238, 248

Rosati Club, 51

Rousseau, R. drew inspiration from, 31; 38, 66, 317, 355

S

Saint Amand, 124

Saint Amaranthe, Madame de, 337, 338, 339, 340

Saint Antoine, faubourg, 347
Saint Etienne, president of Assembly, 126, 144
Saint Fargeau, 318
Saint Honoré, 318
Saint Lazar, prison, 344
Saint Veronica, 318
Sainte-Menehould, 159, 160
St. Denis, 296, 299
St. Louis, order of, 294
St. Just, man of action, 38; devoted friend of R., 40; 279, 292; full name, 294; 295, 296, 297, 305, 306, 326, 331, 341, 349, 352, 354, 364, 365
Salpetriére, 152
Sans Culottes, 150, 317
Santerre, 148, 384
Sauvigny, 106; slain by mob, 107
Scheldt, 284
Séchelles, de, 349
Sections, the, Danton in, 230, 364
Seine, the, 254
Sellieres, Abby of, 175
September Massacres, 283, 344
Sieyès, Abbé, shrewd and crafty, 90; chosen by Third Estate, 90; in consulate with Napoleon, 91; "Third Estate is the French nation," 91
Sombreuil, Mademoiselle, 344
Spear, Robert, 49
Staël, de, Madame, 139
State, 130, 142, 156, 168, 174, 175, 274
States-General, early sessions, 21; Cardinal Lomenie, 24; 70, 76; Estates of, 78, 79; Third Estate, 82, 83; at Versailles, 84, 85; taxes, 109; 143, 156, 168, 184, 215, 226; 5th of May, 233; 234, 308, 312, 385
Strasbourg, 295, 297
Sulean, editor, 152
Supreme Being, 300, 322, 325
Sweden, king of, 162
Swiss, 135, 136
Switzerland, 29

T

Tallien, 351, 352
Tallyrand, Bishop of Autun, at *fête*, 132; prelate, 320
Tençin, prelate, 320
Tennis Court, oath of, 91, 185, 208
Théatre des Variétés, lodging for prisoners, 97, 143
Thellusons, bankers, 138
Théroigne de Mericourt, leader of demimonde, 146; addresses mob, 148; celebrated courtezan, 149, 150
Third Estate, follow nobles putting on hats, 85; appeal to clergy, 88; declare National Assembly, 91; cheered by soldiers, 95; deputies of, 114; 220; 17th of June, 223
Toulon, 342
Town Hall, Foulon lodged in, 105
Trianon, 186, 279
Tribunal, 211; Revolutionary, 329; 331, 345, 351; bulletin of 346; 373
Trinity, 322
Tuileries, abode of king, 123; threatened, 146; nobles flock to, 148; attack on, 152; palace, 168; 230, 232, 249, 267, 273, 283, 323, 382, 383
Turgot, policy of, 139, 215

V

Vadier, 338, 341, 373, 376
Valazé, 280
Valois, monarchs of the, 299
Varennes, flight stopped at, 159, 160; king comes from, 179
Vatican, fulminations from, 126
Vauban, on roads and streets, 121
Velleth, house of, 176; Madame de, 177
Vergniaud, Pierre Victorien, orator, 199, 215, 216, 217, 219, 221, 249; interrupts R., 263; on Corday, 266; 279
Vernet, 196
Versailles, residence of Great Louis, 60, 61; swallowed wealth of realm, 62; churches of Notre Dame and of St. Louis, 84; 97, 98; march to, 112; States-General in, 114; feast at, 120; king brought from, 168; Louis XIV at, 173; 186, 189, 226, 347

Veto, "down with the," 226; "Madame," 207
Victoirè, daughter of Louis XV, 145
Vienna, Théroigne taken to, 151
Vincennes, old fortress, 148
Virgin, 318, 322
Voltaire, in prison, 100; full name, 173; attacks abuses, 174; at death of, 175

W

War, necessary, 223
Webster, 221

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